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LITTLE PLAYS FOR CHRISTMAS

BY

ADA CLARK, MARGARET KIBBE
REBECCA RICE, ALICE WHITSON NORTON
ANNA WILLIAMS ARNETT



BECKLEY-CARDY COMPANY
CHICAGO

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LITTLE PLAYS FOR CHRISTMAS

A CHRISTMAS JOKE

CHARACTERS

BILLIE }
BOBBIE } *three small boys*
MAX }

An ELF who aids Santa Claus

SCENE: *In front of the Christmas tree.*

DISCOVERED: BILLIE seated on a chair with his head on the table as if asleep.

Enter BOBBIE.

BOBBIE. Hello, Billie! What's the matter now? Wake up!

BILLIE [*yawning*]. I've tried to stay awake and watch for Santa Claus, for he surely will be here tonight; but I've waited and waited until I'm so sleepy. [*Yawns and falls asleep again.*]

BOBBIE. Well, go to sleep, then. I don't think he'll be here, anyway. I heard Tommy Jones say he was getting too big to believe in Santa Claus. I'm almost as big as he is, and I think I know just about as much, too. So, away with such silliness! I'm going to sit right here until that candle burns out and then I'll know he isn't coming. [*Takes a seat at the table.*]

Enter MAX whistling.

MAX. Hello, Bobbie! What's the matter with Billie? Is he sick?

BOBBIE. No, he has a silly notion that Santa Claus is coming here tonight and he has been trying to stay awake and see him.

MAX. Well, he *is* coming. I saw his reindeer team at Mr. Brown's as I came by. But he'll never come until we are all fast asleep; so we'd better go to bed, or he'll pass us by.

BOBBIE. No, I refuse to go to bed. If he comes here, I want to see him. Then I can tell Tommy Jones he isn't so smart after all.

MAX. Well, then, if you won't go, we must plan some way to fool Santa Claus and his helpers. Better think fast.

BOBBIE. I've been thinking. If we could dress up like Christmas toys, he'd never guess. He'd come right in and fill our stockings and we could see him.

MAX. That's a bright idea. I'll be a Teddy bear.

BOBBIE [*rising to his feet*]. And I'll be a big wax doll with curly hair, one that will cry, "Ma-ma!"

BILLIE [*raising his head*]. Oh! I heard you. I don't want to be a toy. But I'll be the old house cat that sleeps by the fire.

MAX. Then hurry! Let's all go upstairs and dress up.

[*The three boys hasten from the stage.*]

Enter BOBBIE dressed as a wax doll.

Enter MAX dressed as a Teddy bear.

Enter BILLIE dressed as a black cat.

BOBBIE stands primly beside the tree.

MAX seats himself in a chair.

BILLIE crosses the stage on all fours, mewing like a cat. He curls up on the table as if asleep.

A rap is heard at the door. The children turn to look, but immediately resume their positions.

Enter the ELF, dressed in green suit and cap.

ELF. Ho! Ho! what's all this? [*Turns the doll around and examines it carefully. Bends its body forward. Doll cries "Ma-ma!" Takes hold of Teddy bear's paw and shakes hands. Teddy bear growls. Pulls cat's tail. Cat mews piteously.*]

ELF [*looking bewildered*]. There must be some mistake. Santa Claus has not been here yet. I am one of his helpers. He sent me to see that all the children were fast asleep. But who brought these toys? [*Examines doll again. Doll cries "Ma-ma!" ELF removes doll's cap and discovers BOBBIE. Turns Teddy bear's cap back from face and discovers MAX. Pulls cat's tail off. BILLIE jumps up.*]

ELF. Well, well! So you boys have been trying to fool Santa Claus. That is a good joke. But if he finds you here, he'll not leave you a single present. So scamper away as fast as you can, and go to bed, for I hear his sleigh bells at the door. Good-by, dear little boys, good-by.

[*Children hurry from stage. ELF skips away.*]

—Ada Clark

THE TWINS' CHRISTMAS

CHARACTERS

KATHRYN and NELL.....	<i>the twins</i>
SANTA CLAUS.....	<i>a boy in regulation Santa costume</i>
THE SANDMAN.....	<i>a boy dressed in tan suit and hat</i>
JOSEPHINE.....	<i>girl dressed as a doll</i>
ALTON.....	<i>a boy dressed as a white rabbit</i>
KENNETH	} <i>elves who are Santa Claus' helpers.</i> <i>They should be dressed in close-fitting green suits and caps.</i>
ELDON	
HALE	
HARLEY	

SCENE: *The twins' bedroom, a small bed on one side and a Christmas tree on the other.*

JOSEPHINE, *in crepe paper dress and fancy cap, stands primly beside the tree.*

The RABBIT enters and, after hopping about, takes place beside the tree.

Enter ELVES, skipping.

KENNETH.

Hurry elves, the cold winds blow,
And Santa's sleigh flies o'er the snow.

HARLEY.

To help old Santa is a joy;
I know he'll please each girl and boy.

ELDON.

The children will not have long to wait,
For I hear his sleigh bells at the gate.

Enter the TWINS, dressed in white nightgowns.

TWINS.

Where is Santa, Santa dear?
We dreamed that he was here.

HARLEY.

Well, well, well, who art thou?
Run, run! I'll tell thee now.

KATHRYN.

I am Kathryn; she is Nell.
We are twins. Can't you tell?

ALTON [*hopping across stage on all fours*].

Squee! squee! what do I see?
Two naughty girls, squee! squee!

TWINS.

We're *not* naughty girls, O Rabbit, dear!
'Twas to look for Santa that we came here.

JOSEPHINE.

Run, little girls, or you will find
That Santa will think you most unkind.

NELL [*crying*].

Oh! dear me, why isn't he here?
Will he ever come, Kathryn, dear?

KATHRYN.

Hush, little sister, don't you cry.
For Santa will be here, by and by.

HARLEY.

He'll never come while here you stay;
Go back to your beds, away! away!

[*The TWINS go to bed, but are restless. The SANDMAN enters and as he scatters sand sings.*]

SANDMAN [*sings*]. *Tune: YANKEE DOODLE*
 Sandman loves the boys and girls,
 Sandman is a dandy;
 Sandman puts them fast asleep
 To dream of dolls and candy

[*The TWINS sleep soundly.*]

[*Exit SANDMAN.*]

[*Enter SANTA CLAUS with a large bag of presents. The ELVES help him hang the presents on the tree.*]

SANTA CLAUS.

Dear little elves, we must haste away,
 Back to the Northland, before it is day.

Exit SANTA CLAUS, followed by the ELVES.

[*KATHRYN wakes and tries to waken NELL.*]

KATHRYN.

Wake, little Nell, let's go and see
 What Santa has left on our Christmas tree.

NELL [*rising and pointing toward the sun*].

Oh! Yes, Kathryn, there shines the sun;
 Jump out of bed and away we'll run.

[*They run to the tree and examine the presents SANTA CLAUS has left.*]

TWINS.

And here we are at the Christmas tree!
 There're heaps of presents for you and me,
 And some for others; let's hurry, dear,
 And bring dear daddy and mother here.

Exit the TWINS, running.

—Ada Clark

IS SANTA COMING?

CHARACTERS

DOT and JOE.....*little sister and brother*
 MOTHER....*a larger girl, in a long dress with apron and cap*
 MAY.....*a tiny little girl*
 WILL.....*a little boy*
 SANTA CLAUS.....*a fat boy in Santa suit*
 CHRISTMAS FAIRY....*a graceful little girl in white with gauze wings*

DISCOVERED: DOT and JOE sitting in the living-room, DOT rocking her doll and JOE drawing pictures.

JOE. O Dot, I don't want to draw a picture of a train. I want a *real* train that runs on a track!

DOT. And I am tired of rocking my doll. I want a little table and a set of dishes, so I can have a tea party. I can hardly wait for Santa to come and bring them.

JOE. Well, this is Christmas Eve, and if Santa comes, you will not have to wait long.

DOT. *If* Santa comes. Why, Joe, Santa *always* comes!

JOE. I know he always has come, Dot; but Charlie Curtis told Will and me that he didn't think Santa would come this year.

DOT. Oh, dear! It will not be Christmas without Santa. Why isn't he coming this year, just as he always does?

JOE. Well, Charlie says that Santa Claus is getting too old to travel so far. You know he has been coming to see the children for many, many years.

DOT. I know it, Joe, and I guess he is pretty tired. But what will we do without him? Oh, dear!

JOE. I don't know what we can do, Dot. Here comes Mother.

Enter MOTHER.

MOTHER. Here are your stockings, children. You must hang them up and then get ready for bed. It is almost time for Santa to come. If he should come and find you awake, he would go on without filling your stockings.

DOT *and* JOE. O Mother, is Santa Claus really coming again this year?

MOTHER. Why, I suppose so. He always does come to see good children. Hurry up, now, and get ready for bed.
[*Exit.*]

DOT. Well, Joe, Mother hasn't heard about it, so maybe it is a mistake.

JOE. Maybe it is, but Charlie is older than we are and his daddy has been away up North where Santa Claus lives. It looks as if Charlie ought to know. He told Will and me about it this afternoon.

DOT. Well, if Santa Claus isn't coming, it isn't any use to hang up our stockings. I wonder if Will and little May are going to hang up their stockings.

JOE. Will said he guessed he would not hang his, but I told him that if he didn't hang it, Santa Claus would pass him by if he did come.

DOT. That's right, Joe. Let us hang up our stockings. Mother has them all ready. [*They hang their stockings at the fireplace. If a fireplace cannot be arranged, a string may be put up near by and the stockings pinned to it.*]

Enter WILL and little MAY.

JOE. Why, hello, Will! Why aren't you in bed? Did you hang up your stockings?

WILL. Yes, I thought you were right, Joe. If Santa should come and find no stockings, he would think there were no children there and would not leave any presents. I see you hung yours up, too.

JOE. Yes, and we were just going to get ready for bed. It is almost time for Santa to come.

WILL. Say, Joe, let's just sit here and keep quiet for a few minutes. Maybe we will hear the bells from Santa's sleigh. Then we will *know* he is coming.

JOE. All right. But we must not talk, for if Santa should hear us, he would not come in.

MAY. Oh, no, we must keep still.

[Children sit down and keep quiet. By and by they begin to nod and soon all are asleep.]

Enter SANTA.

SANTA. Heigh-ho! Look here! Children up yet? But they have not seen me, for they are asleep. I must send the Christmas Fairy to put them to bed. *[Exit.]*

Enter CHRISTMAS FAIRY. She skips up to the children and gently awakens them.

CHRISTMAS FAIRY. Wake up! Why, children, don't you know that it is time for you to go to bed? Santa Claus will never come until you do!

WILL. We heard that Santa was not coming this year. Is he really coming?

FAIRY. Yes, he is coming, with his pack full of candy and toys.

CHILDREN *[jumping up and clapping their hands]*. Oh, good, Santa is coming!

WILL. We must go home, May.

MAY *[crying]*. Oh, boo-hoo, boo-hoo! It is so dark, I'm afraid to go home.

WILL. The Christmas Fairy will take us home, May.

FAIRY. Yes, come with me. I will take you home.

[The FAIRY, WILL and MAY start toward the door. The FAIRY turns and waves to DOT and JOE.]

FAIRY. Good night and Merry Christmas, children.

DOT *and* JOE. Good night, Fairy.

ALL THE CHILDREN. Hurrah for the Christmas Fairy!
Hurrah for Santa Claus!

Exeunt.

—Margaret Kibbe

A SURPRISE FOR SANTA

CHARACTERS

JACK *and* WALTER.....*two little brothers*

SUE *and* JANE.....*their little sisters*

MOTHER...*a larger girl, in long dress, apron and house-cap*

FATHER...*a larger boy, in long trousers. A mustache adds
to this character*

SANTA CLAUS...*a fat boy, in red Santa suit, carrying a pack*

Enter JACK *and* WALTER.

JACK. Say, Walter, we'd better be getting our stockings hung. It is almost time for Santa to come.

WALTER. Yes, we must hurry. Where are the girls?

JACK. They have been getting the stockings ready. I will call them. [*Goes to door and calls.*] Sue and Jane, where are you?

Enter two girls carrying stockings.

SUE. Here are the stockings, and there is not a single hole left in any of them. We have mended every tiny hole!

WALTER. That is fine, girls. Santa ought to give you an extra piece of candy for working so hard.

JANE. Well, Santa will soon be coming. I am afraid he will get pretty cold, for it is a cold night.

JACK. Let us build a warm fire, so he can get warm while he fills the stockings.

SUE. Oh, no, Jack! We can't do that, for if the chimney is hot, Santa will get burned.

JACK. That's right. I never thought of that. But I wish we could do something for Santa. He is so good to us every year.

JANE. I know what we can do. We can hang a stocking for Santa Claus and fill it full of nice things. That will make him happy and he will forget he is so cold.

SUE. That is a good idea, Jane. But we have no stocking mended that is big enough for Santa! We ought to hang the biggest one we can find!

WALTER. Yes, it must be big and filled full. Why not borrow a stocking from Mother?

JANE. That will be the very thing! I will call Mother and see if she will lend us a stocking. [*She goes to the door and calls.*]

Enter MOTHER.

SUE. Mother, we want to hang a stocking for Santa, and fill it to the very top. May we borrow one of your stockings?

MOTHER. Why, yes, children. It is very nice for you to remember Santa. I am sure it will make his bright eyes twinkle. Come, Sue, and I will give you the stocking.

Exit MOTHER and SUE.

JACK. Now, while Sue is getting the stocking, let us plan what we will put in it.

WALTER. I am going to put my baseball in the very toe!

JANE. And I will put in my red beads and my new pocket-book!

JACK. I will put in my blue top and the big red apple Grandma gave me this afternoon.

JANE. Well, if Sue puts in something, the stocking will be about full.

Enter SUE with the stocking.

WALTER. We have all planned what we will put in, Sue. What will you put in?

SUE. My doll with the red dress on!

JANE. That will be fine. Let us get the things and hang the stocking.

[SUE hangs the stocking. Each child gets his gift and puts it in the stocking.]

JACK. We would better write a note and pin it on the stocking to tell Santa this is for him.

JANE. Yes, I will get a paper and pencil. I will write—
“Dear Santa: The big stocking is for you. We put our very nicest things in it, and we hope you will like it. Merry Christmas!”

WALTER. That is fine, Jane. Now, pin the note on the stocking, so Santa will be sure to see it. And let's hang our stockings with Santa's.

Enter FATHER.

FATHER. Well, children, are the stockings all hung and ready for Santa? Why, what is this? It looks as if Santa had already been here! .

JACK. Oh, no, Father. Read the note on the stocking.

FATHER [*reads aloud*]. “Dear Santa: The big stocking is for you. We put our very nicest things in it, and we hope you will like it. Merry Christmas!”

[FATHER looks at the things in the stocking and seems much amused.]

FATHER [*laughing*]. Well, children, Santa will surely be

pleased with so many nice presents. Now, you would better go to bed.

[*Exit FATHER, still smiling. The children follow him.*]

Enter SANTA.

SANTA. My, but it is cold out tonight! How many stockings are there here? Why, some one has been helping me! This stocking is already filled. Here is a note. I wonder what it says. [*He goes up to the stocking and reads aloud.*] “Dear Santa: The big stocking is for you. We put our very nicest things in it, and we hope you will like it. Merry Christmas!” [*Turns to audience and speaks.*] Well, bless the children! It was good of them to remember an old fellow like me! I’ll fill their stockings from top to toe!

[*He fills the children’s stockings from his pack, takes the stocking they have hung for him and starts away. Then he turns to the audience and bows.*]

SANTA. Merry Christmas to all!

Exit.

—Margaret Kibbe

CHOOSING A DOLL

FOR SEVENTEEN GIRLS AND ELEVEN BOYS

CHARACTERS

MARY *a little girl in white, frilly clothes—a rich child*

FOUR JAPANESE DOLLS . . . *little girls in Japanese costumes*

JACK-IN-THE BOX . . . *is attended by two boys, who carry
in the box. They are dressed in white, while JACK
himself must wear a long green cap and white ruffle
around the neck, with red and green coat*

FOUR SCOTCH DOLLS . . . *little girls in blue dresses with
white aprons and frilled caps*

FOUR ESKIMO DOLLS . . . *little boys in white canton flannel
pajama suits, white stockings, caps with icicles on top*

FOUR NEGRO DOLLS . . . *in black stockings, without slippers,
red dresses and sunbonnets*

FOUR SOLDIER DOLLS . . . *boys wearing khaki suits and
carrying guns over their shoulders*

FOUR SPANISH DOLLS . . . *girls dressed in black lace dresses,
with colored shawls about their shoulders*

These costumes, with the exception of the Eskimo and the soldier suits, may be easily and economically made from crepe paper.

The stage for this dialogue requires no particular setting, although an arrangement suggesting a small girl's play-house would be effective. The only requirement is a rocking-chair.

MARY enters from Left, carrying a big rag doll and fan; she walks about, caresses her doll, then lays it down beside the chair; seating herself in the chair, she begins rocking and fanning. In meditative attitude she picks up her doll and speaks.

MARY. Tomorrow is Christmas, and my Granny says she's going to give me a doll of my own choosing. [*Cups her chin in the palm of her hand as though in deep study.*] Just what sort of a doll do I want, anyway?

Holds up doll, looks at it, hugs it close to her breast.

I've heard a lot about dolls, Jessica, but I don't believe in all the world there is one so lovable as you. [*Lies back in her chair with doll in her arms. Soon she is fast asleep.*]

[*The DOLLS that appear before her represent the dolls she sees in her dream. In the dream she reclines, but watches the dolls and moves as in a daze.*]

Enter in tripping fashion the four girls representing the JAPANESE DOLLS. They trip around the stage, four abreast, then bowing to the sleeper, speak in concert.

FOUR DOLLS [*together*].

We are the dolls from old Japan,
And with us comes a bamboo fan;
All we want to eat is rice—
Surely we are very nice.

The dreaming child motions them aside.

The DOLLS trip around the stage and take their places to the left of MARY'S chair.

Enter the Two BOYS carrying a big box. They march around the sleeper, bow to her and speak.

Two BOYS [*together*].

There is a dolly as old as the hills,
With blue eyes and soft, golden locks.
If you don't believe it, just take your small hand,
And lift up the lid of this box.

MARY reaches for the lid and unfastens the latch. Up jumps the doll representing JACK-IN-THE-BOX.

JACK looks around, then at MARY as he speaks.

JACK.

I am the jolly gentleman
That lives within a box.
Friends am I to every one,
Regardless of their knocks.

MARY waves him aside.

BOY on left puts hand on JACK'S head, pushes him into the box and lets down the lid. He forgets, however, to hold the lid while he fastens it, so up jumps JACK again. [This feature may be repeated three or four times to good advantage, as it always proves amusing.] At last the BOY on the left closes the lid while the BOY on the right fastens it. Then they pick up the box and move to left of the JAPANESE DOLLS.

Each group arranges itself so the line when finished will form a semicircle across the stage.

Enter FOUR SCOTCH DOLLS. They march around the stage in short, quick steps, and bow to the little dreamer.

FOUR SCOTCH DOLLS [together].

From the land of Annie Laurie,
Where breezes softly blow,
Quite well you'd do in choosing
Your Christmas doll, we know.

MARY impatiently waves them aside. The SCOTCH DOLLS take their places to the left of the THREE BOYS.

Enter the ESKIMO DOLLS. With measured step they march around the platform and bow to the dreamer.

ESKIMO DOLLS [*together*].

If you would choose an Eskimo
For your dolly, well we know
You would be considered wise,
And most pleasantly surprised.

MARY *reaches out and pats the DOLLS on the head, then waves them aside.*

The ESKIMOS take their places to the left of the SCOTCH DOLLS.

Enter the FOUR NEGRO DOLLS, all broadly grinning. They march around the stage, and then bow to the dreamer.

NEGRO DOLLS [*together*].

Happy little dolls are we,
Friendly, too, as we can be—
Though our skin's as black as night,
We'll fill your days with pure delight.

MARY *reaches out as if to grab one of the dolls. Instantly they dodge, and then go circling around her chair in a stiff little running step, taking their places at last to left of the ESKIMOS.*

Enter the FOUR SOLDIER DOLLS. They march with military step around the platform, and then bow to the dreamer.

SOLDIER DOLLS [*together*].

We are the Nation's very own,
And subject to its call;
So if you choose a soldier doll,
You won't go wrong at all.

MARY [*leaning forward*]. Right—left, right—left, right—left, right—left, [*as she speaks the SOLDIERS march to the left of the NEGRO DOLLS*].

Enter the FOUR SPANISH DOLLS. They trip about the platform, and then bow to the dreamer.

SPANISH DOLLS [*together*].

If it's beauty you are looking for,
And not a fancy name,
Then I'd suggest you choose a doll
That comes from sunny Spain.

A dinner bell is rung vigorously behind the curtain. Immediately the JAPANESE DOLLS start on a run for the entrance by which they mounted the platform; THE BOYS with JACK-IN-THE-BOX follow, and each group in succession follows. Thus the line moves. A pleasing feature is to let the performers circle the stage twice before leaving the platform.

When the stage is cleared of everybody except MARY, still asleep in the chair, she begins to stir slightly; lazily she rubs her eyes, then straightens up and begins looking about the stage, clearly expressing great amazement. Then she jumps out of the chair and prances about the stage, stopping where the dolls stopped; she peeps under the chair as if looking for something; then, lifting her old RAG DOLL in her arms, she speaks reflectively.

MARY. Well—well—well—old Jessica [*holds doll closer*] it seems to me as if I'd been looking at a score or more of dolls—Japanese dolls, Scotch dolls, Spanish dolls, dolls of every kind imaginable, and yet—oh, I know [*smiles broadly*] I've been asleep, Jessica [*happy tone*] and the dolls I've seen have only been dream dolls. But—O Jessica—some of them were so pretty.

VOICE *from behind the curtain calls long and loud.*

VOICE. M--a--r--y—oh, Mar-ee—

MARY [*yawns sleepily*]. I'm—coming—

VOICE [*back of curtain*]. Better be coming, and that quickly. You've slept so long you've already missed your dinner.

MARY *crawls out of chair and, hugging her old RAG DOLL closely, starts toward rear of stage, stops and speaks to her doll.*

MARY. We don't mind missing our dinner, do we, Jessica? Dreaming such dreams as we have just dreamed is better than eating any day. [*Exit.*]

CURTAIN

—Alice Whitson Norton

THE TOY SHOP MIX-UP

FOR FOUR BOYS AND THREE GIRLS

CHARACTERS

SANTA CLAUS	<i>boy of teen-age</i>
MRS. SANTA	<i>girl of teen-age</i>
LOLLIPOP	<i>a helper in the shop—Junior</i>
FLEET-O'-FOOT	<i>second helper—Junior</i>
TEDDY BEAR	<i>a toy</i>
DONKEY	<i>a toy</i>
JACK-IN-A-BOX	<i>a small child</i>
CURLY LOCKS	<i>a small child</i>
MONKEY	<i>a toy</i>
RED RIDING HOOD	<i>a small child</i>

Arrange the stage as a workroom; sewing machine in center, big box marked "Paint" on the left; big box marked in black letters "Left-overs" on the right. Curtain divided in center back to form doorway.

Curtain rises on MRS. SANTA stitching industriously on the machine, a pile of material by her side. LOLLIPOP searching in the left-over box. FLEET-O'-FOOT at work at the paint box, putting the eyebrows on a toy monkey.

Enter SANTA CLAUS. He shakes the snow from his garments, rubs his ears briskly, glances at the seamstress, opens his mouth in surprise.

MRS. SANTA [*looks up, sees expression on SANTA'S face*].
Don't look so blue, Santa. We'll have everything ready by night.

SANTA [*gruffly*]. I'm not so sure about that. If you'd only listen to me, and begin the toy-making in time to finish before the rush comes on, you'd find things a lot easier.

MRS. SANTA. Keep cool, Santa, keep cool! We'll get you off in plenty of time.

SANTA. And I'll be thoroughly exhausted, too, when I leave.

MRS. SANTA. That makes no difference.

SANTA. Does to me. I like to start on my Christmas round with plenty of time to amble along; as it is now, I'm going to be so rushed I won't have a minute to spare.

FLEET-O'-FOOT. Here's the last monkey on the order, Santa. Want to look him over?

SANTA [*crosses the room, examines the MONKEY, tweeks his ears, shifts his cap, then stares fixedly at his eyes. Turns to FLEET-O'-FOOT*]. What you mean putting rabbit eyes in this monkey's head?

FLEET-O'-FOOT [*opens his mouth in surprise and turns toward LOLLIPOP*]. Lollipop gave them to me—he's the one that made the mistake.

LOLLIPOP [*turns from the box marked "Left-overs" and eyes SANTA indignantly*]. All I could find in the left-

over box at this late hour. Nobody will know the difference but you. [*Turns back to the box.*]

SANTA [*gruffly*]. Won't—eh? The very idea—sticking rabbit eyes in a monkey's head! [*Pretends to wipe the MONKEY'S eyes.*] There, there—don't cry. Rabbit eyes are the prettiest eyes in the world, Monk. Just be careful and don't say anything about 'em. [*Takes the MONKEY to the door.*] Run along now, and wait with the others till I'm ready to leave. Be careful about your clothes, and don't tell anybody you've got rabbit eyes.

MRS. SANTA [*lifts the garment she's sewing on from the machine and inspects it carefully, turns to FLEET-O'-FOOT, beckons him towards her*]. Bring me that unfinished sailor lad, Fleet-o'-Foot, and put this suit on him.

FLEET-O'-FOOT *parts the curtain and leads in a little curly-headed girl, in her petticoat, and begins to put her into the sailor suit.*

SANTA [*sees and throws up his hands in horror*]. Land o' mercy! Fleet-o'-Foot, don't you know the difference between a girl and a boy? That's Curly Locks you've got.

CURLY LOCKS [*shakes her head saucily and speaks in high-pitched tone of voice*]. I don't mind being a sailor.

SANTA [*gruffly*]. Pretty sailor you'd make! [*To FLEET-o'-FOOT.*] Get her out of those clothes. [*Turns to LOLLIPOP.*] Haven't you got a fluffy dress of some sort for this little lady?

LOLLIPOP [*stirs the contents of the box before him vigorously, brings out a fluffy ruffled garment, holds it up for inspection*]. What about this? I think it's about her size.

SANTA [*takes the garment, shakes it out and hands it to FLEET-O'-FOOT*]. Put it on her. [*Turns to MRS. SANTA.*] What you working on now?

MRS. SANTA [*holds up a teddy-bear suit*]. This is for the last bear — go put it on him.

SANTA *takes the garment and starts towards curtain.*

LOLLIPOP [*fastening the last button on CURLY LOCKS' dress, shoves her aside and reaches for the garment in SANTA'S hand*]. You finish Curly Locks, and I'll dress the bear. [*Passes behind curtain.*]

SANTA CLAUS [*adjusts CURLY LOCKS' clothes, smiles*]. You're not a bad looking lassie, even if they did try to make a sailor of you.

CURLY LOCKS [*in high tones*]. I'd ruther to be a lady, Santa, than a sailor, so I won't have to play with boys.

SANTA CLAUS. Of course you would.

MRS. SANTA [*examines a gray garment, then looks at LOLLIPOP*]. Got a bow-wow up there for the stuffed doggie?

LOLLIPOP [*turns things upside down in the left-over box, then turns his face towards MRS. SANTA*]. Don't see a bow-wow anywhere. Here's a good "me-ow" for a cat. Can we use that?

SANTA. The very idea! Putting a cat's voice in a dog's body—tut, tut!

Enter FLEET-O'-FOOT with the TEDDY BEAR in his arms.

FLEET-O'-FOOT. Here he is, Santa, all ready for the big ride.

SANTA [*examines the BEAR and looks suspiciously at FLEET-O'-FOOT*]. Sure you haven't got a dog's bark inside this bear?

FLEET-O'-FOOT. No danger; a bear isn't supposed to make any noise.

SANTA CLAUS. All right. Put him with the rest of the toys.

FLEET-O'-FOOT takes the BEAR to the door and puts him out.

MRS. SANTA [*lifts a red cape from the machine*]. Put this on little Red Riding Hood, Fleet-o'-Foot.

FLEET-O'-FOOT *takes the garment and disappears through the curtains.*

SANTA *looks at his watch and begins to tramp up and down the room.*

MRS. SANTA [*looks up from her work*]. Don't get nervous, Santa. We'll get you off in good time.

SANTA. Good time—nothing! I should have been on my way before now.

Enter FLEET-O'-FOOT, leading RED RIDING HOOD, her cape trailing on the floor.

SANTA [*looks at RED RIDING HOOD in amazement*]. My, my! What a fright! Cut off that cape! It looks like old Mother Hubbard instead of Red Riding Hood.

MRS. SANTA. Come, Red Riding Hood, I'll fix your cape in a jiffy. [*Turns to LOLLIPOP.*] Bring me some fancy pins, Lollipop.

LOLLIPOP [*digs desperately into the left-over box and brings out a card of huge safety-pins, holds them up for MRS. SANTA'S inspection*]. All we've got left. Will they do?

SANTA [*excitedly*]. No, indeed! What you trying to do? Send Red Riding Hood out fastened up with horse-blanket pins? [*Turns to MRS. SANTA.*] Make a tuck in her cape, good wife.

MRS. SANTA [*reaching for a needle with a long thread*]. Very well, Santa, very well. But pins will be quicker work.

SANTA [*snappishly*]. Then use 'em by all means! Put 'em on the under side of the garment and hurry.

MRS. SANTA [*tucks up the cape with pins, then eyes RED RIDING HOOD and turns to FLEET-O'-FOOT*]. Add a bit o' paint to her cheeks, Fleet-o'-Foot. [*Goes back to sewing.*]

FLEET-O'-FOOT *leads* RED RIDING HOOD *to the paint box and dabs her cheeks with bright red paint.*

SANTA [*eyes the proceeding*]. Remember, Fleet-o'-Foot, she's Red Riding Hood—not a clown in a circus.

MRS. SANTA [*to LOLLIPOP*]. Get a basket, Lollipop.

LOLLIPOP [*rumages in the box, brings out a dilapidated basket*]. Will this do?

MRS. SANTA [*eyes the basket*]. Put a new coat of paint on it, Fleet-o'-Foot, and we'll see how it looks.

FLEET-O'-FOOT *takes the basket, RED RIDING HOOD looking on in disgust.*

SANTA. Paint won't hide those broken ribs. Don't waste time painting it. She'll have to carry something else.

LOLLIPOP [*reaches into the box, brings out a suitcase*]. How'll this do?

MRS. SANTA [*excitedly*]. Fine, Lollipop, Fine! A suitcase is more modern anyway, than a basket.

SANTA CLAUS [*disgustedly*]. You might let her carry a wardrobe trunk!

RED RIDING HOOD [*in high mechanical voice*]. I don't want to carry a trunk. I want a basket!

LOLLIPOP [*places the suitcase beside RED RIDING HOOD*]. Carry the suitcase, Red Riding Hood. It's new, at least.

RED RIDING HOOD *picks up the suitcase, eyes it critically, and then very stiffly goes marching out.*

SANTA CLAUS [*eyeing the door*]. Poor little thing! I've a good mind not to take her at all.

MRS. SANTA. Oh, take her along, Santa, the basket idea's getting old anyway. [*Picks up a long brown ear and eyes it critically, then turns to FLEET-O'-FOOT.*] Bring in that unfinished donkey, Fleet-o'-Foot.

FLEET-O'-FOOT. Yes, Ma'am. [*Exit.*]

SANTA [*looks apprehensively at his watch*]. I think I'd better be going.

MRS. SANTA [*peevishly*]. Don't be so impatient, Santa. We'll get you off in plenty of time.

Enter FLEET-O'-FOOT, bringing a DONKEY minus one ear and his tail. He hands the unfinished toy to MRS. SANTA and stands with back to audience.

MRS. SANTA *fastens the ear on, holds the DONKEY up and squeezes him. FLEET-O'-FOOT, with back to audience, imitates the barking of a dog.*

MRS. SANTA *looks surprised.*

SANTA [*stamps his foot on the floor indignantly*]. Pretty mess you've made now, making a donkey bark like a dog! [*Turns to LOLLIPOP*]. Here, Lollipop, can't you find a bray for this donkey?

LOLLIPOP *tosses things about in the left-over box, then reaches for the toy—handles him roughly, as if extracting and replacing the mechanical speaker, then hands him back to SANTA.*

SANTA *squeezes the DONKEY and immediately he brays loud and long. (FLEET-O'-FOOT can perform this act also.) Everybody looks pleased.*

MRS. SANTA. Put him in the pack, Fleet-o'-Foot, and bring me that Jack-in-a-Box.

FLEET-O'-FOOT [*exit with the toy, returns to the curtain*]. Come and help me, Lollipop, I can't carry this JACK-IN-A-BOX all by myself.

LOLLIPOP. All right, I'll help you. [*The boys bring in JACK-IN-A-BOX, and set him on the floor beside MRS. SANTA.*]

MRS. SANTA *examines JACK-IN-A-BOX.*

JACK-IN-A-BOX, *with only his undershirt and a pair of trousers on, jumps up.*

MRS. SANTA [*pushes him down and throws up her hands in horror*]. Mercy me! Jack, behave yourself, 'till we get you dressed. [*Reaches for a white polka-dot blouse and swiftly put it on the boy in the box*].

SANTA CLAUS [*eyes the unfinished toy, looks at his watch*]. I think I'd better be going. Jack-in-the-Box can be omitted all right this year.

JACK-IN-THE-BOX [*jumps up*]. Please, Santa, don't leave me behind. I'll be so lonesome here all by myself.

MRS. SANTA [*hastily adjusts a cap on the boy's head and pushes him back in the box*]. Bring me a screw, Lollipop.

LOLLIPOP *rushes to the left-over box and begins hurriedly throwing things about.*

MRS. SANTA [*looks towards FLEET-O'-FOOT*]. Bring me a dab of black paint, Fleet-o'-Foot.

LOLLIPOP [*springs up from the left-over box*]. Here's a screw. [*Gives it to MRS. SANTA, who screws it in the lid of the box.*]

FLEET-O'-FOOT. Here's the paint. [*Gives it to MRS. SANTA. She opens the box, and JACK hops up.*]

MRS. SANTA [*puts a streak of black paint over each brow and a dab of red on each cheek, then sits back and eyes him critically*]. If you do as well as you look, Jack, you'll make somebody mighty happy on Christmas morning.

JACK-IN-THE-BOX. I'll do my best.

MRS. SANTA. Good enough. [*Pushes JACK down and fastens the box and turns to the helpers.*] Put him in the pack, boys.

LOLLIPOP and FLEET-O'-FOOT *carry the box out through curtain.*

SANTA *looks at his watch, and begins to button his coat.*

MRS. SANTA [*boastfully*]. There you are, my good man, with the last toy done and everything ready for traveling. All you've got to do now is *go*. [*Points to the door.*]

SANTA [*starts, comes back and, leaning over the machine, tickles MRS. SANTA under the chin*]. You're not mad at old Santa, are you, good wife?

MRS. SANTA [*thoughtfully*]. I'm not what you'd call mad, I reckon, but your impatience gets on my nerves. All this mix-up came about simply because you rushed around here like a chicken with his head off, and made us all nervous.

SANTA [*thoughtfully strokes his beard*]. Maybe I am too impatient. But what would happen to the children of this country if I failed to arrive on schedule time?

MRS. SANTA. You haven't failed yet.

SANTA. No, but time's precious.

MRS. SANTA. Then away with you—and may happiness follow the sleigh.

The jingle of sleigh bells interrupts the conversation. The old pair look at each other.

Enter LOLLIPOP and FLEET-O'-FOOT.

BOTH [*in unison*].

The sleigh's ready, sir.

SANTA *kisses MRS. SANTA—or waves—good-by, and rushes for the door.*

MRS. SANTA, LOLLIPOP and FLEET-O'-FOOT [*in unison*].
Good-by, Santa.

A jingle of bells and the stamping of feet comes from behind the scene.

SANTA. Good-by. [*Faintly.*] Good-by [*still more faintly*]
Good-by. [*Answered each time by the three on the stage*].

MRS. SANTA [*brushes her kerchief across her eyes, then turns to her helpers*]. Clean up the workshop, boys, then go out and take a holiday for yourselves. But [*she points a warning finger at them*] don't forget to be back January first. Let's make an effort next year to have things ready on time. What do you say, boys?

LOLLIPOP and FLEET-O'-FOOT [*together, in emphatic tone of voice*]. Agreed!

MRS. SANTA *takes each by the hand as if sealing the pledge, and they all smile together.*

CURTAIN

—Alice Whitson Norton

THE FAIRIES AND A CHRISTMAS TREE

An Acrostic

FOR ELEVEN GIRLS AND ONE BOY

CHARACTERS

MOLLIE.....*first speaker, a little girl*

BONNIE..*second speaker, sister to MOLLIE, a year younger*

[*Both should be good speakers*]

JESSIE.....*third speaker* C*an older girl*

JEAN.....*fourth speaker* H

MARY.....*fifth speaker* R *The nine girls carry in the*

MAY.....*sixth speaker* I *order indicated the letters*

BESS*seventh speaker* S *of the acrostic. They should*

LILY*eighth speaker* T *be of about the same size to*

POLLY.....*ninth speaker* M *represent a group of fairies*

JENNY.....*tenth speaker* A

MABEL..*eleventh speaker* S

SANTA CLAUS

COSTUMES

The fairies wear costumes of white canton flannel, sprinkled with diamond dust, each carrying a dainty paper basket on the left arm, marked plainly with the letter each represents. The baskets, when made of pink paper and decorated with black letters, are very effective. The flat flower basket design lends itself readily to hanging on the tree.

SCENE: *A barely furnished room decorated with a small cedar tree. Essentials: a rocking-chair and a small fireplace.*

Curtain rises on MOLLIE in a little drab frock, standing beside the empty tree with a wistful expression on her face. She shakes her head sadly.

MOLLIE. What's the use having a tree? [*Looks at the fireplace.*] Santa'd never get down that small chimney, even if he found the house—and I'm afraid he won't do that, we're so far from the main part of town.

Enter BONNIE, wearing a shabby coat and cap but thrilling with happiness.

BONNIE [*clapping her hands joyfully*]. Oh, Mollie, Mollie! Santa Claus is in town! I saw him in Leeds' department store! And such a huge pack [*measures with her arms outstretched full length.*] Dolls and toys and horns sticking right out the top where everybody could see.

MOLLIE [*sneeringly*]. Little good it'll do us!

BONNIE [*thoughtfully*]. Why not? I'll call on the fairies. They love to make children happy.

MOLLIE. I've heard they did, but I don't think it's true. I remember you called on them last year, and our tree was too skimpy for words.

BONNIE. Yes, and I remember you felt the same way about it then as you do now.

MOLLIE. And we didn't get anything scarcely, either.

BONNIE. All because you lacked faith. [*Moves nearer MOLLIE and points a finger in her face.*] Now listen here,

MOLLIE. If you want to find a full stocking or a heavily loaded tree on Christmas morning, you've got to go to bed believing you'll find these things when you wake.

MOLLIE [*scornfully*]. Tut, tut! The days of fairies and miracles are past. That tree [*motions towards the cedar*] will look just the same in the morning as it does to-night—mark my words!

BONNIE [*stamps her foot impatiently*]. I won't believe it! I'm going to bed believing the fairies will come and decorate my tree, and that Santa Claus will stop by and leave some gifts on it for me.

MOLLIE. If you're so sure of this, why don't you sit up and watch for their coming?

BONNIE [*eagerly*]. I'll do it! [*Crosses the floor and drops into the rocking-chair by the hearth.*]

MOLLIE [*moves to the door, looks back at her sister and smiles wisely*]. I hope you won't be disappointed, sister. See you in the morning. Good night! [*Exit.*]

BONNIE [*screws herself into a comfortable position in the chair and gazes idly about the room, finally fixing her eyes upon the fireplace*]. The Santa I saw at Leeds would never be able to get down that chimney—unless [*pauses reflectively*] unless, of course, he'd visited other homes first. [*Screws in the chair a bit restlessly.*] Of course he'd do that—coming all this way out. Anyhow [*sleepily*] I believe in fairies and I believe in Santa Claus, and I'm sure I'm going to have a happy Christmas. [*She closes her eyes, leans her head back and goes to sleep.*]

Enter JESSIE. *She hurriedly crosses the floor and, standing before the sleeper, eyes her critically.*

JESSIE. Poor little thing! Your belief in fairies shall be verified! Your tree shall be decorated. The fairies heard *basket on her arm she produces a handful of candles and your wish, and I shall start the decorations.* [*From the proceeds to put them on the tree.*]

JESSIE [*as she adds the candles*].

O candles red and brown and pink,
 And yellow, green and blue,
 I'll hang you here and then I'll leave
 The shining part to you.

JESSIE *hangs the basket bearing the letter C on a low limb on the left side of the tree, and steps to right of platform.*

Enter JEAN, bearing a basket labeled with the letter H. She nods at Jessie and goes dancing across the floor to the tree. From her basket she produces a holly wreath bright with red berries, and hangs it on the tree. While she makes it secure, she speaks.

JEAN [*recites*].

O little wreath of holly bright,
 Come brighten up this little tree.
 May your berries gleam to-night,
 Because a child has faith in me.

JEAN *hangs her basket to right of C and steps back to JESSIE'S side.*

Enter MARY, bearing a basket labeled R; she sees the FAIRIES, motions them to silence, then glancing at the sleeping child, tiptoes to the tree and begins to extract a long red ribbon; fastening one end of the ribbon to a twig, she goes swiftly around the tree, then stops and speaks.

MARY [*recites*].

Little tree, hold high your head,
 For the fairies still exist,
 Wear with pride your ribbon red [*slowly*]
 We must prove to—that—small [*points
 towards the sleeper*]—Miss.

MARY hangs her basket right of H, and takes her place to left of JEAN.

Enter MAY, bearing a basket labeled I; she nods gaily at the girls, then at the sleeper, then hastily crosses the floor to the tree; producing some iridescent bulbs from the basket—six gaily colored ones make a good display—arranges them in the branches, then standing back, admires them as she speaks.

MAY [recites].

O jolly little bits of glass,
 With your soft glint and glow,
 You'll bring a lot of happiness
 And joy to her [motions to the sleeper]
 I know.

MAY hangs her basket to right of R, and takes her place next to MARY.

Enter BESS, bearing a basket labeled S; she puts her fingers to her lips as she nods to the FAIRIES, glances at the sleeper and, tiptoeing to the tree, from her basket she produces great handfuls of snow and tosses it upon the tree, speaking as she throws it.

BESS [recites].

Hold to those branches, little flakes,
 Hold on with all your might!
 To those dear eyes [motions towards the
 sleeping child] we trust that you
 Will prove a wondrous sight.

BESS hangs her basket to right of I, and takes her place next to MAY.

Enter LILY, bearing a basket labeled with the letter T; she trips lightly across the room and holds a whispered conversation with the fairy group; then, eyeing the

sleeper, she moves on to the tree and from her basket produces a string of tinsel; this she arranges on the leaves, then standing back, speaks joyously.

LILY [*recites*].

A little bit of this and that,
 When added all together,
 Will make a jolly Christmas tree,
 Regardless of the weather.

LILY hangs her basket to right of S, and takes her place next to BESS.

Enter POLLY, bearing a basket labeled with the letter M; POLLY claps her hands with delight, while the FAIRIES plainly display their anxiety with "S-s-h——s-s-h — s-s-h." POLLY discovers the sleeper, stops, then moves gracefully to the tree. From her basket she produces a bunch of mistletoe, and hangs it on the branches, and as she fastens it she speaks.

POLLY [*recites*].

O merry, merry mistletoe,
 I'm glad you came along;
 You fill the heart with happiness
 And tune the lips to song.

POLLY hangs her basket to right of T, and takes her place next to LILY.

Enter JENNIE, bearing a basket labeled with the letter A; she prances nimbly around the room, stoops before the sleeper, caressingly touches her hair, then trips across the floor to the tree, and from her basket produces a lovely tinsel angel; this she carefully places on the highest limb possible, and as she fastens it on, she speaks.

JENNIE [*recites*].

O little angel, spread your wings,
 Just as they did of old,
 When wise men came to seek the Child
 With frankincense and gold.

JENNIE hangs her basket to right of M, and takes her place next to POLLY.

Enter MABEL, bearing a basket with the letter S; she pauses at the entrance as if frightened. The FAIRIES motion her to come in. She sees the sleeping child, then hastily crosses the room to the tree. From her basket she produces a miniature Santa Claus, searches for a prominent place to put him; selecting a limb, she fastens him on, and as she works she speaks.

MABEL [*recites*].

You're such a jolly, jolly chap,
 You always make things hum.
 Please smile your best for her [*points
 finger at sleeper*] in case
 The real one doesn't come.

MABEL hangs her basket on the tree and steps back to side of A. Here the FAIRIES all glance towards the sleeper, then admire the tree with the word Christmas circled across it. Joining hands, they form a circle and dance around the tree. A loud noise behind the curtain causes them to stop; they stand in listening attitude for a minute, then start running off the stage as fast as their nimble feet will carry them.

As soon as the last FAIRY disappears off the stage, SANTA appears, emerging down the chimney. [*This may be arranged easily by cutting the brick paper before the performance.*] He drags a heavy pack behind him.

On the hearth he straightens up, eyes the sleeper, then the tree, and then looks at his sack.

SANTA. I can see the work of the good fairies around here, but they haven't got anything on me! I'll [*moves to the tree, looks at his sack again—speaks slowly*]. Yes, I'll do it—I'll just leave the pack right here under the tree. [*Places it.*] And she [*looks back at the sleeper*] can open it herself in the morning.

The sleeper stirs, and SANTA makes a dash for the chimney.

BONNIE [*wakes up just as SANTA disappears; she rubs her drowsy eyes, looks about the room, sees the tree and springs to her feet, claps her hands joyously and starts towards the tree, calling loudly*]. Mollie—O—Mollie—come quick! Everything's happened just as I said it would. [*Joyously.*] Tree — fairies — Santa Claus — everything!

CURTAIN

—Alice Whitson Norton

CHRISTMAS TIME AT SANTA'S HEADQUARTERS

FOR FIVE GIRLS AND EIGHT BOYS

Four Teen-age Characters, Five Juveniles, Four Juniors

CHARACTERS

- SAILOR DOLL [*juvenile*] *in uniform, with one arm concealed*
 RED CROSS NURSE. [*juvenile*] *minus a cap*
 TEDDY BEAR. [*junior*] *brown woolly garment, one ear
concealed*
 ESKIMO GIRL. [*juvenile*] *white canton flannel coat, leg-
gings, and one overshoe*
 JANE and JOY. *two dolls [girls, juvenile]. JOY in long
white ruffy dress, one leg concealed. JANE in petticoat,
waiting for her dress*
 DONKEY. [*junior*] *dull brownish costume, black ears,
long tail, voice missing*
 MONKEY. [*junior*] *red jacket, black trousers, red cap,
tail missing*
 JACK-IN-A-BOX. [*junior*] *sitting pose, fancy red and
white-spotted blouse, tie missing*
 JOCK. [*teen-age*] *a jolly helper in overalls*
 JOE. [*teen-age*] *careful helper, workman in khaki clothes
and apron*
 MRS. SANTA. [*teen-age*] *black dress, white cap, apron
and spectacles*
 SANTA CLAUS. [*teen-age*] *red coat, tassled cap, and boots
or leggings*

The costumes may be easily made from cambric cloth at very little expense; the Donkey alone has to stand on all fours occasionally, and he is quite attractive when posed on his haunches. This is a more comfortable position, also.

OPENING SCENE

MRS. SANTA *at the machine, stitching away furiously on a pink, ruffly dress for JANE.*

JOE *busy at his work bench, assembling the parts of a wagon.*

JACK *working industriously over a box supposedly containing all the left-overs of the season.*

Enter SANTA. He looks about the room at the unfinished toys, eyes his watch, then turns towards MRS. SANTA.

MRS. SANTA *looks up at SANTA and smiles.*

SANTA [*nervously*]. Just twenty hours, good wife, until I'll be leaving. Think you'll make it?

MRS. SANTA [*continues sewing, keeps her eyes on her work*]. Sure, will make it; you've never failed to start on time yet, have you?

SANTA [*gruffly*]. Never had so many unfinished toys at headquarters before at this late hour. [*Sighs loudly*]. I'm afraid we'll be late this time.

MRS. SANTA [*lifts the ruffly garment from the machine, eyes it carefully*]. It's almost finished.

SANTA [*eyes frock, too*]. That's all right, my dear, that's all right—put it on Lady Jane and be done with it.

MRS. SANTA [*in astonished tone of voice*]. Why, Santa, I'm surprised that you would have Lady Jane start out unfinished.

SANTA. But I'm telling you I'm going to be late getting off this year.

MRS. SANTA [*indignantly*]. Sit down, Santa—you make me nervous. [*Turns to jolly helper.*] Find me a couple of safety-pins, Jock. [*Turns to LADY JANE.*] Come, Jane, let's get into this little dress.

SANTA *ambles across stage and drops into big chair.*

JANE rises from the floor and moves in doll-step fashion to MRS. SANTA'S side.

JOCK [*finds the pins and hands them to MRS. SANTA, eyes the doll*]. Stick 'em in good and hard, Mrs. Santa, so they won't lose out.

JANE [*pouting*]. You wouldn't want a lot of old pins stuck in your back, I bet you.

MRS. SANTA [*slips dress over JANE'S head and adjusts the ruffly skirt*]. I'll be careful, dearie.

JANE [*anxiously*]. You won't stick a pin in my back, will you, Mrs. Santa?

MRS. SANTA [*turns JANE about and fastens the back*]. We'll stick a pin in Jock if he doesn't mind his own business. [*Gently pats the ruffles down; turns to SANTA*]. Now, isn't she perfectly lovely, Santa!

JANE prances across the floor to SANTA'S chair.

SANTA [*leans forward in his chair, eyes JANE happily*]. She's lovely all right, and she's finished—thank goodness for that! [*Turns to JOCK*]. Put her in the pack, Jock.

JOCK. Please, Santa, leave her with us in the workshop till we get the rest finished. See—we can place the toys right here against this wall. [*Leads LADY JANE to rear of platform and places her against the wall*].

JOE [*comes forward with wagon*]. Put her in this, it's done.

JOCK places DOLL in wagon.

SANTA. Very well, you can have your way; but don't waste any time playing with the toys. I tell you I'm liable to be late.

JOCK and JOE place LADY JANE in wagon and go back to their places.

SANTA [*looks around, discovers the TEDDY BEAR, speaks gruffly*]. What's wrong with old man Teddy? Speak up.

TEDDY BEAR [*weak, high whining voice*]. I haven't—got—but—one—ear.

MRS. SANTA [*to JOCK*]. It's true! Find me an ear, Jock. [*To carpenter.*] Make another box, Joe. [*To the BEAR.*] Come along, Teddy, we'll fix that ear of yours right now and be done with it.

TEDDY BEAR *crosses the floor to MRS. SANTA.*

JOCK [*searches in the box and rises up*]. Here's an ear. [*Holds one up from the box for inspection.*]

MRS. SANTA [*eyes the TEDDY BEAR'S ear, takes the one JOCK hands her, shakes her head, then hands it to JOE*]. Cut it down, Joe, it's too long.

JOE *takes his scissors, trims the ear and hammers it noisily.*

TEDDY BEAR [*shivering*]. Whew! but I'm glad that ear isn't fastened on yet.

MRS. SANTA. You should be glad. [*Turns to JOE.*] That's enough, Joe.

JOE *hands the ear to MRS. SANTA, who immediately begins sewing it in place.*

TEDDY BEAR *twists and squirms as if it were very painful.*

MRS. SANTA. There, now [*clips off the thread*] isn't he lovely, Santa?

TEDDY BEAR *hops over for inspection.*

SANTA [*eagerly eyes TEDDY BEAR, looks at JOCK*]. Put him aside, Jock—he's finished. [*In an undertone.*] Thank goodness for that!

MRS. SANTA [*eyes the SAILOR DOLL and RED CROSS NURSE,*

and motions them to come to her side, then turns to JOCK]. Get me a good long arm, Jock, and a white cap.

JOCK [*dives into the box of left-overs, searches diligently, lifts up a bonnet*]. Can't find a cap. Won't this do?

RED CROSS NURSE [*indignantly*]. Not for me!

JOCK [*lifts an arm*]. Here's an arm all right! [*Lifts a long sleeve from the box and gives it to MRS. SANTA.*]

MRS. SANTA. Try again for the cap, Jock. And [*turns to JOE*] cut out a tail for the monkey, Joe, while I adjust this sailor's missing member. [*She adds the arm, and the SAILOR DOLL is well pleased.*]

JOCK *tosses her a cap; she adds that to the RED CROSS NURSE'S head, then tacks the tail onto the MONKEY and looks at the group proudly.*

MRS. SANTA. Here're Uncle Sam's children and a coconut eater, Santa, all ready to make some little heart happy. What do you say?

SANTA [*heartily*]. Thank goodness they're ready! Step lively, folks, step lively.

The SAILOR DOLL *and* RED CROSS NURSE *move to rear of stage and sit down beside the TEDDY BEAR and LADY JANE.*

MRS. SANTA [*eyeing JOY, the doll with one leg*]. Come, Beautiful, let's add that missing leg of yours. [*Turns to JOCK.*] Find me a shapely leg, Jock. [*Turns to Joe.*] Add a buckle to that patent leather slipper, Joe.

JOCK [*dives into the box, brings out a stuffed stocking, turns to MRS. SANTA*]. How's this?

JOY, *the one-legged doll hops across the floor to MRS. SANTA'S side, carefully concealing her foot.*

MRS. SANTA [*eyes the doll and the leg, then smiles happily*].

The very thing, Jock. [*Pretends to fasten on the leg, hiding it beyond chair from audience.*]

JOE. Here's your shoe [*tosses same to MRS. SANTA who adds it, and turns to SANTA*]. Look at her, Santa. Isn't she beautiful!

SANTA [*anxiously*]. Thank goodness she's finished. Add her to the pile, Jock, and hurry.

MRS. SANTA [*throws up her hands in despair*]. Please, Santa, be patient; we'll get you off in good time. Let me see [*eyes the unfinished toys*] what's the matter with you, Jock?

JACK-IN-THE-BOX [*springs up, speaks very slow and deliberately*]. I haven't—got—no—tie—on.

JOCK *dives into the box and brings out a dark tie.*

JACK-IN-THE-BOX [*jerkily*]. I—don't—like—that.

JOE [*grabs a strip of red cloth*]. I'll make you a tie, Jack, bright enough for anybody.

JACK. I—like—that.

MRS. SANTA. So do I. Give it to me, Joe. [*Takes the tie, fastens it on JACK'S neck. All laugh merrily.*] [MRS. SANTA *turns to SANTA.*] Look, Santa, isn't that fine?

SANTA [*gruffly*]. It's enough that he's finished. Put him with the rest of the toys and hurry. [*Claps his hands.*] Hurry, I tell you!

JOCK and JOE *lift the box containing JACK, and place it beside the dolls; then they make three unsuccessful attempts to push JACK down in the box before the cover can be fastened. [The rougher JACK is in this scene the funnier the situation.]*

MRS. SANTA [*eyes the toys*]. Who's next? [*Sees the DONKEY; looks surprised.*] What's the matter with you, old howler?

DONKEY *paws the floor angrily.*

• MRS. SANTA [*to JOCK and JOE*]. What ails old howler, boys?

JOCK and JOE [*in unison*]. Guess we better examine him and see.

DONKEY *paws the floor angrily as the boys stroke his body.*

JOE and JOCK *examine the DONKEY—they look in his mouth.*

The DONKEY shakes his head. They examine his feet. The DONKEY stamps indignantly. The boys press his side, then stand back and look at each other in surprise.

JOCK [*turns to MRS. SANTA*]. As sure as the world, Mrs. Santa, he's minus a voice.

The DONKEY begins to prance about gleefully.

MRS. SANTA. A voice? You mean to say we forgot to give that Donkey a voice!

JOE. I'm sure it's a voice that's missing.

MRS. SANTA [*sadly*]. What can we do?

JOE. I'll make him a voice.

JOCK. Can't put it in after you make it.

MRS. SANTA [*anxiously*]. Make it, Joe, make it! Maybe if he'll swallow it, 'twill work.

JOE [*rushes to his work bench, grabs up sheet of leather, or cardboard, several nails and a pair of scissors; then looks from one to another in amazement*]. What does a voice look like?

MRS. SANTA [*snatches up a piece of cloth, makes a few rapid scissors cuts and tosses it to JOE*]. Here's one, but don't look at it, Joe—just add it to the donkey. It will work, I'm sure.

JOE [*moves towards the DONKEY*]. Come, donkey boy, get your voice. [*Holds out his hand.*]

The DONKEY paws the floor indignantly.

SANTA [*steps out of his chair, whips a long-bladed knife from his pocket, turns to JOE*]. Give me that voice. I know how to add it properly.

JOE gives SANTA a strip of cloth wadded up in a ball.

SANTA [*walks to side of the DONKEY, pretends to slash the DONKEY'S side, while some one behind the curtain noisily tears a strip of cloth*]. There, now. [*SANTA turns, motions to MRS. SANTA.*] Come, hurry! Bring a needle with a strong thread and sew up the cut.

MRS. SANTA [*hastens to comply with SANTA'S request, and the DONKEY twists uncomfortably during the operation. MRS. SANTA clips the thread and looks at the animal*]. Now I hope you will use your voice, since you've got it. [*Pretends to wind up spring from the side.*]

The DONKEY shakes his head, makes a funny little noise, then a long, loud bray follows.

SANTA [*claps his hands over his ears, shouts*]. Take him out—take him out! He's over-finished!

JOCK and JOE run the DONKEY to rear of stage.

SANTA [*turns to the ESKIMO*]. What's the matter with you? I must be leaving here.

THE ESKIMO [*in a stuttering voice*]. Plea—plea—please, s-sir—I—I—I—need a—a—a overshoe.

SANTA [*gruffly*]. Why take a month to say so? I'm in a hurry.

MRS. SANTA [*excitedly turns to JOCK*]. Find an overshoe for Eski, quick, Jock, quick!

JOCK [*dives into the box, searches diligently, brings out the overshoe*]. Here's your shoe, Eski! Put it on, hurry, now, hurry, or you'll be left on the shelf for another year.

ESKIMO [*puts the shoe on and immediately begins to holler*]. Oh, oh, oh—there's a tack in it! [*Jerks it off.*]

MRS. SANTA. Hammer it down, Joe, hammer it down—quick, quick!

JOE takes the shoe, hammers the tack down, then returns it to the ESKIMO, who dons it and walks away happily.

SANTA [*looks at his watch and his mouth opens in surprise. Eagerly he turns to JOCK and JOE, and speaks excitedly*]. I've only five minutes to get away in. Hurry, boys, take the toys to my sleigh, while I get into my fur cap and mittens. [*Turns to MRS. SANTA.*] Find my whip, wife.

Exit JOE, JOCK and all the toys rapidly.

MRS. SANTA *hands SANTA his gloves and cap which he hastily dons.*

SANTA. Now my whip, and I'll be on my way to make the little folks happy.

MRS. SANTA *hands him the whip, and SANTA rushes out.*

SANTA [*at the door turns, waves hands merrily*]. Good-by wife; clear up the house while I'm away, so we can have a few weeks' peace when I return. Good-by. [*Exit.*]

MRS. SANTA. Good-by. [*Drops down in chair, bows her head on the machine wearily.*]

Sleigh bells jingle noisily from behind the curtain, then gradually the noise diminishes and silence reigns.

MRS. SANTA *raises her head, looks around the empty room and signs happily.*

Enter JOE and JOCK.

JOE [*merrily*]. Well—we finally got him off.

JOCK. And now we can rest in peace for a little while, I guess.

MRS. SANTA. Yes, we can all rest for a little while, so you boys clear out and have a little Christmas fun yourselves, for very well you know with the beginning of the New Year, plans for all sorts of new toys will begin to be made at Santa's headquarters.

JOCK [*looks about sadly*]. It's lonesome around here without the toy folks, isn't it?

JOE [*looks about the room and smiles*]. I guess I'll be ready for work with the beginning of the New Year. I don't like the headquarters empty like this.

JOCK. Neither do I. [*Thoughtfully*]. But if I know what I'm doing, the gifts are going to be all ready and waiting at Santa's headquarters when Christmas time comes next year.

MRS. SANTA. Well said, my dear, well said. Let's shake hands on that.

The three workers join hands in a hearty clasp.

CURTAIN

—*Alice Whitson Norton*

CHRISTMAS EVE ON THE TROLLEY CAR

FOR ANY NUMBER OF PLAYERS FROM TEN TO TWENTY-EIGHT, ALL AGES

CHARACTERS AND COSTUMES

CONDUCTOR *in uniform*
 MOTORMAN *in uniform*
 SIX GIGGLING GIRLS
 MR. MADDOX *a very deaf traveler*
 MRS. MAHONEY *widow in black*
 JIMMY MAHONEY *small boy in sport clothes*

PROFESSOR GREENE.....*sour old bachelor*

ELSIE BROWN...*talkative spinster in old-fashioned clothes,
very long feather in her hat, arms full of bundles*

MRS. NEWRICH...*haughty matron wearing long dangling
earrings, arms filled with packages*

MISS WEBSTER.....*jolly, fat old maid*

SIX BOYS.....*all carrying bundles*

MR. PAINE....*with twins in his arm. Twins loaded with
Christmas parcels*

MRS. PAINE.....*loaded with Christmas toys for the twins*

JOE AND BILL.....*with a Christmas tree*

MR. DUNCAN....*feeble and blind, wearing patched clothes*

SAM DUNCAN....*one leg shorter than other, in ragged
clothes, leading the old man*

STAGE SETTING: *Arrange a double row of chairs lengthwise through the stage, to represent a street car; this can be done easily by using corrugated board or even brown wrapping paper, with windows cut out and outlined in black. Arrange rear of platform as nearly like a trolley car as possible, with signs over the windows, representing local firms, and as many chairs as necessary to accommodate players. Have a pull bell at one end of car for the conductor's use, and a push bell (a noisy one) for the motorman, since there is necessarily a lot of traffic on Christmas Eve.*

Curtain rises on the empty car, supposedly in the car shed.

Enter the MOTORMAN.

MOTORMAN [*in grouchy mood. He inspects the car, tries out the brake, stamps the foot bell, consults his watch*].
Time to be leaving here.

Enter the CONDUCTOR.

CONDUCTOR [*whistling merrily "Casey Jones," or some old, familiar tune*]. Hello, Mack. All set for traveling?

[Turns the sign on the side window of the car—Hazel Grove Car. Make sign so everybody can read easily. Use name of a familiar street, if possible, for this is always pleasantly received by an audience,]

MOTORMAN. I'm all set, but by heck, I dread the trip.

CONDUCTOR [*brushing off the seats*]. Dread the trip? Why, Mack, I always look forward to a run on Christmas Eve; so many funny things happen among the late shoppers.

MOTORMAN. Funny? Where do you get that stuff? The whole thing's rotten, and this Christmas giving habit [*snarls moodily*] well, I set my foot down ag'in it this year at my house! I'm not going to wear myself out working for somebody else's benefit—no, sir-ree!

CONDUCTOR [*whimsically*]. Oh, well, everybody doesn't see and feel alike; there're some folks in the world that live to a ripe old age and die without ever tasting the joy of life. Come on, let's go. [*Pulls the bell vigorously*].

MOTORMAN [*stamps foot bell, leans forward as if looking ahead, looks back at the CONDUCTOR*]. There's a crowd waiting on the corner. Guess we're in for a hard run to-night, Joe.

CONDUCTOR *jerks bell cord*; MOTORMAN *makes noise resembling a stopping car*.

CONDUCTOR. All aboard for Chester, Link, Sedgegrass and Walnut Street! (*These names should be changed to familiar suburban streets.*)

Enter six girls, giggling hilariously, arms piled with bundles. They pay fares and scramble for seats. All bunch together where they can whisper and giggle continuously.

Enter MRS. MAHONEY and young son, JIMMY, both carrying packages.

CONDUCTOR *jerks the bell cord.*

The MOTORMAN stamps the foot bell.

MRS. MAHONEY *flops into a seat, and JIMMY misses his chair altogether, drops a sack of marbles which roll all over the car. He begins to pick them up.*

THE GIRLS *twist in their chairs and giggle.*

CONDUCTOR [*jerks the bell and calls noisily*]. All off for Chester Avenue! [*Pulls cord and flings open door.*]

Enter PROF. GREENE, ELSIE BROWN, MRS. NEWRICH. *They pay fares and make for seats.*

CONDUCTOR *jerks bell.* PASSENGERS *lunge forward, and last PASSENGERS fall into seats.* MISS BROWN *sits down beside the PROFESSOR and begins counting her change; PROF. GREENE spreads newspaper and begins to read; MRS. NEWRICH takes a seat in front of MRS. MAHONEY and JIMMY.*

JIMMY *reaches out and thumps the drop on MRS. NEWRICH'S earring. MRS. NEWRICH gives JIMMY a withering look.*

MRS. MAHONEY *snatches JIMMY'S hand back. GIRLS giggle.*

MRS. MAHONEY. Behave yourself, Jimmy! Now you mind!

JIMMY *fidgets in his seat until his mother turns her head. Then he gives the eardrop another vigorous thump.*

Again the GIRLS giggle noisily.

MRS. NEWRICH [*turns on JIMMY indignantly*]. Another thump from you, young man, and out the window you'll go. Smoke that, will you!

JIMMY [*eases back in seat*]. Smoke! What does she mean, ma? I don't see anything to smoke—do you?

GIRLS *laugh hilariously.*

MRS. MAHONEY. Be still, Jimmy! Be still! [*Shakes him by the shoulder and pushes him back in the chair.*]

CONDUCTOR *jerks bell.*

MOTORMAN *gives signal of stopping car.*

CONDUCTOR. All aboard for Hazelnut Grove!

Enter six BOYS and MISS WEBSTER. Four BOYS rush ahead and take the four remaining seats, leaving MISS WEBSTER and two BOYS to stand.

MISS WEBSTER *waddles up aisle, giving everybody ugly looks, but nobody rises. She reaches for a strap, steps on a marble, drops her bundles, then tries to pick them up.*

MISS BROWN, *to avoid contact, leans toward the PROFESSOR and brushes his nose with the feather on her hat.*

PROF. GREENE *shows his displeasure keenly, tries to protect himself from the feather with his paper.*

DR. MADDOX *comes to MISS WEBSTER'S rescue, and helps her recover her packages.*

MISS WEBSTER [*beams with pleasure and bows to DR. MADDOX*]. Women are certainly helpless creatures without man's assistance.

DR. MADDOX [*hand to ear*]. Huh?

MISS WEBSTER [*louder*]. I said women are helpless creatures without men.

DR. MADDOX [*hand to ear*]. Huh?

MISS WEBSTER [*louder and irritably*]. I said women are helpless critters without man's assistance.

DR. MADDOX [*smiles happily*]. Yes, yes, assafetida is fine for skeeters. [*Thoughtfully.*] But why worry about the pesky critters at Christmas time?

MOTORMAN *beats foot bell.*

A whoop of laughter escapes the lips of the giggling
GIRLS.

MISS WEBSTER *shows her displeasure.*

CONDUCTOR *jerks bell, leans forward as if opening door.*

MOTORMAN *gives the stop signal.*

Enter MR. and MRS. PAINE, and their CHILDREN, MR. PAINE carrying the twins, MRS. PAINE with arms filled with bundles; JOE and BILL dragging a Christmas tree. As there are no vacant seats, they stand along with MISS WEBSTER.

MISS BROWN *turns to see the passengers, brushes PROFESSOR'S nose with her feather. He hits at the feather, misses it and strikes MISS WEBSTER.*

PROF. GREENE [*apologetically*]. Beg your pardon.

MISS WEBSTER [*icily*]. I'd think you would!

CONDUCTOR *jerks bell; MOTORMAN stamps foot bell. Everybody lunges forward, then settles back. Those standing sway about as folks do on a fast-moving car.*

MR. PAINE *steps on a marble, stumbles about but regains his poise.*

GIRLS *giggle and clap their hands.*

JIMMY, *seeing his chance, gives the long eardrop a mighty whack.*

GIRLS *shriek with laughter.*

MRS. NEWRICH [*jumps to her feet and faces MRS. MAHONEY*]. Better take that boy off this car and do it right now, if you don't want him hurt!

BOYS [*in aisle*]. Sit down!

CONDUCTOR [*noisily*]. All off for Link Avenue!

GIRLS *scramble out of seats and make for door, dropping and picking up bundles as they go. The standing PASSENGERS drop into the vacated seats.*

Exit the six giggling GIRLS.

CONDUCTOR *jerks bell. Everybody lunges forward.*

MISS WEBSTER *seats herself in a seat vacated by one of the GIRLS, directly across the aisle from MISS BROWN.*

MR. and MRS. PAINE *settle themselves in vacant chairs and arrange the babies and the bundles. MOTHER PAINE plays with the babies to the disgust of all present.*

MISS BROWN [*looks at MISS WEBSTER, registers astonishment, leans over and taps MISS WEBSTER on the knee. Both show surprise*]. Josephine Webster, sure as I'm living!

MISS WEBSTER. Elsie—Brown! [*They lean across aisle and kiss each other affectionately.*]

ROUDY BOYS. Wasn't that good!

PROF. GREENE *looks up in disgust, then hides behind his paper.*

MISS BROWN [*oblivious to everybody in the car, leans nearer her friend*]. Do tell me, Josephine, what's bringing you home at this season of the year?

MISS WEBSTER. Christmas, Elsie, Christmas. What's the use of succeeding, if you can't spend the Christmastide with the folks you love?

CONDUCTOR. All off for Riverside Drive.

DR. MADDOX [*jumps up, looks towards CONDUCTOR and speaks excitedly*]. What's the matter?

CONDUCTOR [*shouts*]. All off for Riverside Drive!

DR. MADDOX [*sinks into seat again, speaks directly to MISS BROWN*]. Thought he said fever and hives.

MISS BROWN *throws her head back haughtily and gives PROFESSOR GREENE'S nose another brush with her feather.*

PROF. GREENE *comes out of his seat and throws his paper in the aisle, looks angrily at MISS BROWN and literally drags his feet over her lap, upsetting her bundles, as he makes for the rear door.*

PROF. GREENE [*angrily*]. Wait, Conductor—let me off—I'm a good mile from home—but [*gives MISS BROWN another ugly look*]. I can walk maybe without a feather under my nose. [*Exit.*]

A shout of laughter goes up from the PASSENGERS.

ROUDY BOYS [*heads out of window*]. Go to it—the road's not crowded.

CONDUCTOR. All aboard for Sedgegrass Corner.

Enter MR. DUNCAN and SAMMIE, the old man leaning on the boy.

SAMMIE [*peers about the car, sees a vacant seat up front, catches the old man by the hand*]. Come on, grandpap—here's a seat.

CONDUCTOR *waits for old man to be seated, then jerks the bell.*

PASSENGERS *lean forward and settle back, all eyes on the last PASSENGERS.*

SAMMIE [*excitedly*]. Jes' wish you could see this car, grandpap.

MR. DUNCAN. What's the matter with it, Sammie?

SAMMIE. Looks like Christmas used to look when we lived in a big house and had plenty to eat.

MR. DUNCAN [*brushes his eyes with a handkerchief*]. Don't think about those days, Sammie—they're gone.

I'm a useless old man now, without money and without friends.

SAMMIE. Don't talk like that, grandpap; you've got me—I'll be big enough some day to earn money, and then we'll buy back the old home and live like princes—we will.

MR. DUNCAN. Dream on, Sammie, 'tain't going to hurt nothing, but Christmas without anything to give is might dull.

SAMMIE. You got a good spirit, grandpap, that helps some, and I'd be almost happy if we only had a few little gifts to take granny and Aunt Essie's children [*eyes the tree and claps his hands.*] There's a tree on the car, grandpap, that would just fit in the corner by granny's bed. Wish we had a tree.

BILLY PAINE [*steps up to SAMMIE*]. That's my tree—I'll give it to you.

SAMMIE [*in surprise*]. Me—give that tree to me!

BILLY. Why not? Isn't Christmas the time to spread joy?

SAMMIE [*shakes his head*]. I guess you better keep it; 'twouldn't look pretty without popcorn and ornaments and a few gifts—and—and—I've nothing to put on it.

MISS BROWN [*fumbles at the packages in her lap and, bringing forth a big bag, hands it to SAMMIE*]. Here's some tinsel and ornaments, son—you're welcome to them—like as not we'll have more than we can use, anyway.

SAMMIE [*takes the bag modestly but eagerly*]. Thank you, kind lady, thank you. [*Peeps into the bag.*] These things will make a tree pretty, even if it hasn't any gifts on it.

DR. MADDOX [*eyes the boy and bag, then hastily examines a bundle in his lap, and hands a package to SAMMIE*]. There're some bright candles, little fellow; maybe they'll help.

MISS WEBSTER [*taking a book from her packages*]. And here's a lovely story book.

SAMMIE [*reaches for it*]. Thank you, lady, thank you.

MRS. MAHONEY *pinches JIMMY and hands him a package to give to SAMMIE.*

JIMMY [*peeping into the sack as he goes to SAMMIE*]. Peanut candy and all-day suckers—Here. [*Hands them to SAMMIE.*] Hang these on the tree with my compliments.

MRS. PAINE [*takes a package from her pile and hands to SAMMIE*]. And this [*displays a lovely cap*] for your Granny, from me.

MRS. NEWRICH [*hastily uncovers a bulky package in her lap, revealing a cake, hands it to SAMMIE*]. Add this to your tree, from me, young fellow. I can buy another one.

ROUDY BOYS [*pull out Roman candles, firecrackers, sky-rockets from their pockets, look at them lovingly, then march up the car to SAMMIE and lay them in his lap. One speaks*]. Add this to your tree from me.

OTHER BOYS. And me—And me—And me.

SAMMIE *excitedly accepts the gifts and piles them in the old man's lap.*

CONDUCTOR [*jerks the bell*]. All off for Sedgegrass Corner.

[*Everybody exeunt except SAMMIE and MR. DUNCAN, all calling a "Happy Christmas" to SAMMIE as they go.*]

CONDUCTOR *jerks the bell.*

The MOTORMAN stamps the foot bell. The two passengers sway with the motion of the car.

SAMMIE [*sticks head out the window, calls*]. Happy Christmas, everybody. [*Looks back at the bundles, then up at the old man.*] The spirit of Christmas isn't dead yet, grandpap, is she?

MR. DUNCAN. No, sonny, no; the spirit of giving is just as good today as it was back yonder when the wise men

saw the star heralding the birth of the Savior and brought their gifts of frankincense and myrrh.

SAMMIE [*peeps out the window and lays a hand on the old man's arm*]. Here's the end of the line, grandpap. How will I ever get off with all these things?

CONDUCTOR. I'll help you off, sonny. [*Steps up, fills his arms with the packages.*]

Exit SAMMIE and MR. DUNCAN.

MOTORMAN *takes up his stool along with a tool or so and goes to other end of car.*

CONDUCTOR *changes the trolley, then from either end of the car the two face each other.*

CONDUCTOR [*merrily*]. Well, Mack, we've had a pretty easy run for Christmas Eve, haven't we? [*Thoughtfully.*] But I tell you that last couple I took on almost wrung the joy out of my heart. I certainly was glad when the folks opened up and shared their blessings with those unfortunate people.

MOTORMAN [*solemnly*]. So was I, Jack, even though I thought I'd gotten over all this Christmas foolishness.

CONDUCTOR. We don't ever get over being happy, Mack.

MOTORMAN [*slowly*]. Reckon not. Any way, that incident opened my eyes. Folks aren't nearly so selfish as I was letting myself believe them to be, and that speech the old man made about the Christmas spirit of giving [*pauses*] that stung me to the heart, Jack.

CONDUCTOR [*consults his watch*]. Me, too, Mack—but no time now for arguing, if we get back in town on time.

MOTORMAN. Let's go, boy.

Bells clang and they're off.

MOTORMAN [*looks back at CONDUCTOR, calls pleasantly*]. You might be remembering as you ride, that the very

minute old Mack gets off to-night he's going to rush right home and take his whole family to town to do their Christmas shopping.

CURTAIN

—*Alice Whitson Norton*

THE KING'S CHOICE

CHARACTERS AND COSTUMES

THE TREES OF THE FOREST. . . . *a number of children dressed in green tissue paper clothes and standing about the room. Each child holds upright the branch of a tree wrapped with green tissue paper*

THE KING. . . . *a boy dressed in royal costume with crown and scepter*

THE KING'S ATTENDANTS. . . *several boys dressed as courtiers*

THE KING'S HERALDS. . . . *boys dressed in herald costumes wearing plumed hats, and carrying trumpets*

THE OAK TREE. . . . *a child dressed in green tissue paper, holding a branch wrapped with green oak leaves*

THE WILLOW TREE. . . . *a child in green tissue paper, holding a branch covered with long, drooping fringes of green tissue paper*

THE WALNUT TREE. . . . *a child holding a branch with walnuts suspended from the branches*

THE PINE TREE. . . *a child in green, holding a small pine tree*

When everything is ready, one of the KING'S HERALDS enters the forest, blowing his trumpet and shouting.

PROLOGUE

PAGE [*recites*]. One time Grandfather and Grandmother

Silverhair invited all their children and grandchildren to the farm to spend the Christmas holidays.

Christmas Eve they had a wonderful Christmas tree. Beautiful colored lights and sparkling ornaments hung upon the tree.

There were nuts, apples, candies and presents for everyone. Oh, it was a beautiful Christmas tree. And everyone was happy.

The next night—Christmas night—the children gave a play. They called the play “The King’s Choice.”

The king was to go to the forest where there were many kinds of trees.

There he was to choose a tree to take to the palace for his children’s Christmas tree.

All the trees were eager to be the one chosen. It was a great honor to be the Christmas tree at the king’s palace for the children of the king.

When you see the play, you will find out which tree was chosen.

This is the way the children played it. They used green lights in the room.

KING’S HERALD. The king is coming! The king is coming! The king is coming! He is coming through the forest. He will prove all the trees of the forest. The one that is found worthy shall be chosen to be the Christmas tree at the Palace for the children of the king.

OAK TREE. Hark! what is that the King’s Herald is saying?

WILLOW TREE. He says that one of us is to be the Christmas tree at the Palace for the children of the king.

WALNUT TREE. Yes, but he says we must prove ourselves.

WILLOW TREE. I wonder how we are to prove ourselves.

OAK TREE. I am sure the king will wish to have the *strongest* tree for the Christmas tree at the Palace. I am the strongest tree in the forest. I shall be the one chosen.

WILLOW TREE. Not so! the king will wish to have the most

beautiful tree for the Christmas tree at the Palace. I know I am the most beautiful tree in the forest. I shall be the one chosen.

WALNUT TREE. Not so, foolish one! The most *useful* tree should be the one chosen. I am the most useful tree in the forest and should be the Christmas tree at the Palace. I shall be the one chosen. [*He draws himself up proudly.*]

PINE TREE [*sighing*]. Oh, I wish I might be chosen by the king, to be the Christmas tree at the Palace, for I love little children. I love to be with them. But I cannot hope to be chosen, for I am not strong, nor useful, nor beautiful. I am only small and green. I do not even have leaves. [*The little PINE TREE sighs again.*]

A bugle sounds and another HERALD comes into view, followed by the KING.

OAK TREE. Hark! there comes the king! I shall stand tall and straight. The king shall see how strong I am. Even the wind cannot bend me. [*Stands up very straight, awaiting the coming of the KING.*]

WILLOW TREE. Oh, there comes the king! I must flutter my leaves and wave my branches. He shall see how beautiful I am. [*Bends body and sways gracefully.*]

WALNUT TREE. Ah! the king at last! I must rattle my nuts and throw out my branches. He shall see how useful I am. [*Rattles the nuts on the branch. The KING walks up to the OAK TREE, stops before it, and speaks.*]

KING. Should you like to be the Christmas tree at the Palace?

OAK TREE [*eagerly*]. Oh, yes, king, I should.

KING. What could you do there?

OAK TREE. I could fill the great room at the Palace, I am so large. No one could bend me, I am so strong.

KING. I shall think about what you tell me.

KING walks to WILLOW TREE.

KING. Should you like to be the Christmas tree at the Palace?

WILLOW TREE [*bowing gracefully*]. Yes, O King, I should.

KING [*looking closely at the WILLOW TREE*]. What could you do there?

WILLOW TREE. I could flutter my leaves, and wave my branches. Everyone would say, "What a beautiful tree!"

KING. I shall think about what you tell me.

The KING goes to WALNUT TREE. When the KING stops before it, WALNUT TREE salutes the KING.

KING. Should you like to be the Christmas tree at the Palace?

WALNUT TREE. I should, Sir King, I should.

KING. What could you do there?

WALNUT TREE. I could shake my branches and give you nuts to eat.

KING. I shall think about what you tell me. Who is that over there? [*Pointing to PINE TREE.*]

WALNUT TREE. Oh, that is only little Pine Tree. He is of no use whatever.

KING. I shall let him speak for himself. [*Goes over to PINE TREE.*]

KING. Should you like to be the Christmas tree at the Palace?

PINE TREE. O king! I should like it more than anything I can think of!

KING. What could you do there?

PINE TREE. I could do nothing. But I love little children so dearly, they might do anything they wished with me, and I should be happy only to be with them.

KING. You are just the one I want. [*Speaks to ATTENDANTS.*] Take little Pine Tree to the Palace and dress him in the Shining Robe. He shall be the Christmas tree for my children.

PINE TREE is led behind a curtain to be dressed in tinsel. A bright robe is thrown over him and a Christmas tree substituted for the untrimmed pine. Then the curtain is drawn, showing the tree trimmed and lighted.

—*Anna Williams Arnett*

PUTTING ON THE SCHOOL PLAY

The eight Christmas plays following were originally intended for schoolroom use, although the plays are adaptable to other presentation as well.

The average schoolroom is not particularly well adapted for a dramatization calling for elaborate stage setting. The space in front of the children's desks is too small to permit many characters to be in action on it at the same time. The doors are not apt to be conveniently placed to provide the exits and entrances specified in the play. For these reasons ingenuity and skill of the teacher are often taxed to the limit. All these plays have been worked out with reference to the teacher's standpoint as well as the child's, and the requirements of the subject matter itself. Difficulties of stage management and rehearsals have been minimized as far as possible.

"Mrs. Santa Claus' Christmas Reception" was first enacted by school children on a tiny stage in a community house. There indeed we had the glory of a real stage and curtains which could be drawn together at the end of the first act; but even so we worked under serious disadvantages. Chief among these was the lack of space for dressing. There was hardly room for us in the wings, and, with pinning, tying, and arranging hair, it was not the calmest half hour we ever spent by any means. However, the work of procuring the costumes themselves, the technique of placing the right children on the stage at the right time, and the

method of conducting rehearsals, all were planned to reduce the teacher's work.

"A Present for Joy" and "Evelyn's Christmas Lesson" were both worked out under the unfavorable conditions of schoolroom presentation.

Children love to give Christmas plays. The day of the performance is one of the red-letter days of the school year. The children enjoy taking part and they love to see their classmates and children of other rooms take part. They derive much benefit from the opportunity afforded for self-expression. The effort requires originality and responsibility on the part of those who are chosen as stage managers. The occasion gives rise to an enthusiasm and a holiday spirit that are contagious.

Unfortunately there are some teachers who cannot work up a corresponding enthusiasm. Christmas is a busy season and the Christmas play adds greatly to the amount of work to be done. It is hard to find suitable material.

In staging the school play, it is well to bear in mind that almost all shifts of scenery have to be made before the audience. Therefore the changes must be simple. The children appointed to do this work should know exactly what is needed, where to get it, and where to put it.

"The Christmas Eve Prince," "The Light in the Window," and "When Wishes Come True," are one-act plays calling for one-scene setting only.

In most of these plays there is no change of costume between acts. It is a difficult matter to get a class into costume without help, to say nothing at all of the difficulty of making lightning changes between times.

There are some stage props that it would be well for a teacher to secure and keep from year to year. A Santa Claus suit is always in request at Christmas time. One of our most cherished and beloved stage props is a red satin cape which was once an evening wrap. The uses to which

we put that cape are amazing. It has cloaked the haughty Massasoit, lent color to a valentine queen, served as royal robe to many a princess, and has been worn by a witch, by Santa Claus, and by Red Riding Hood.

Not every school will be presented with a red cape of bygone cut, but a simple red cambric one is inexpensive and will prove a worth while addition to the costume box. A black cambric peasant bodice or two will also be a distinctive asset; and old, discarded evening clothes, if you have or can beg them, hold possibilities in store.

Costumes do not need to be elaborate. I sometimes think we get more real fun and satisfaction out of the improvised makeshift than we do out of the more expensive costume. It is effect and not detail that counts.

A crown may be nothing but a circlet of yellow paper trimmed with tinsel, in reality, but in the realm of imagination it is the emblem of royalty. A scarf wound around a little head and another tastefully draped about a garment further embellished with several strings of beads, will create a gypsy. A cocked paper hat, a sword fashioned from an old lath, a cap and a pistol may represent a fine, soldier costume.

No one realized who saw the effective and colorful peasant dress of the poor child in "A Present for Joy," that the white waist was a torn relic of two summers before, which had been serving its mission in life as a doll dress; the bright red, paisley-trimmed skirt was a long scarf folded and basted into skirt form, and the headgear an old silk scarf. The remembrance of these heterogeneous elements and the finished result is very gratifying. I should not have felt like asking the child's mother to make a costume, when, with about ten minutes' work, I could create one out of a conglomeration of ingredients myself.

Some mothers refuse to let their children be in a play because they feel they cannot afford the money or the time

to make costumes. It seems a pity that a child should be denied the joy of taking part, when such charming results may be obtained by the exercise of a little ingenuity.

Cinderella's godmother has nothing on the teacher in a downtown school, when it comes to transforming little beggars into princesses. Most of us hesitate about asking parents to make and supply costumes. Especially is this true in a section where the parents are not at all well to do. Yet to the child mind, a play without costumes is like a cake without frosting. The idea of getting out of plain Mary Smith and becoming a fairy or a princess or a beggar girl is spoiled, if Mary Smith cannot herself feel the part, and costumes do help.

Yet children are not unduly critical of their costumes. It is we teachers who see defects, not the uncritical eyes of the child, nor the proud, delighted ones of the mothers.

—*Rebecca Rice*

THE FAIRIES' CHRISTMAS PARTY

CHARACTERS AND COSTUMES

NOREEN..	}	<i>Fairies dressed in white, with tissue-paper wings. Bits of tinsel will add glitter.</i>
COREEN..		
IRENE...		

ZIP....*brownie, dressed in green or brown. A plain school suit may be touched up with green trimmings and a jaunty crepe paper hat*

BERRY....*similar to ZIP, but with the addition of strings of cranberries, or red beads*

STAR CHILD....*long white dress, tinsel decorations, a crown of stars and a star-tipped wand. She carries in her hand a star for the tree*

SNOWFLAKES. . . . *four little girls in white, trimmed with tinsel. One has tinsel for the tree, another artificial icicles and the other two artificial snow*

THE BIRTHDAY BUNDLE MAN. . . . *boy with as many bundles of all sizes and shapes as possible tied to him*

TIM. }
 DON. } *Little children for small parts*
 JEANETTE. . . . }

DORIS. }
 BETTY. } *Believers in fairies*

TIME: *After school, a few days before Christmas.*

PLACE: *In the forest. There is a small Christmas tree set up nearly in the middle of the stage.*

NOREEN. Oh dear!

COREEN. Oh dear me!

IRENE. Oh deary, deary me!

ZIP. For goodness sake! What is the matter with you fairies? You look as doleful as a rainy Saturday.

FAIRIES. We are so sad!

ZIP. Why are you sad?

NORENE. We want to have a Christmas party.

COREEN. Just like the little earth children have.

IRENE. With a Christmas tree, you know.

ZIP. That isn't such a bad idea. Why don't you go ahead and have one?

NOREEN [*exchanging glances with the other FAIRIES*]. Why, I never thought of that.

COREEN. Neither did I.

IRENE. Nor I.

COREEN. But how can we manage it, Brownie?

ZIP. I am sure I cannot tell you. I was never at one in all my life. Why don't you ask the Christmas fairies?

NOREEN. Oh, that would never do! They are so busy at this time of the year. We will have to manage it all by ourselves.

COREEN [*sitting down and weeping*]. Oh dear, then we can't have a Christmas party, for there isn't one of us that knows a thing about it. We can't have one, after all.

IRENE. Oh yes, we can. I am sure we can. [*She hops up and down.*] We can find out from the children.

NOREEN. Is it not sad that the children no longer believe in us? If they did, we could have a wonderful party. They could tell us what to do and then we could invite them to the party.

IRENE. It is the fairy law that no fairy may have anything to do with any one who does not believe in fairies. Perhaps we could find out by listening, how the children plan their parties.

ZIP. They will be coming by on their way home from school pretty soon. I shouldn't be surprised if they were talking about it. It's all they are thinking about these days.

NOREEN. Sh! I think I hear them coming!

COREEN. We must hide.

IRENE. Here is a place behind the pine tree.

ZIP. I'll take down all they say in my little book.

COREEN. Sh!

The FAIRIES put their fingers on their lips and hide.

Enter TIM and DON from Left.

TIM [*stopping at Center of stage*]. Yes, I came pretty near tumbling out of that old tree. The branch broke under me. If I had not caught hold of the branch below, I'd have had an awful bump.

DON. You were lucky. What did you get?

TIM. Oh, a nice bunch of mistletoe and some evergreen. Isn't Christmas fun?

DON. I'll say it is. Look, Tim! Isn't that a dandy little tree? It would make a perfect Christmas tree.

TIM. If dad had not already bought one, I'd take it home. Come on, we've got to hurry.

DON. Oh, yes! I forgot the popcorn that we have to string for the tree.

TIM. I have to go down the street for more presents and you needn't plan to come with me, either. Don't string less popcorn than you eat, Don.

NOREEN. Did you get that all down, Zip?

ZIP. All but the popcorn. What is popcorn, anyway?

COREEN. I am sure I can't tell.

IRENE. Hark! Sh, can't you? Here come three little girls. Perhaps they can tell us more.

Enter GIRLS.

JEANETTE. We are going to have a lovely golden star on the top of our tree, and tinsel and pretty ornaments all over it. I must hurry, for I am going after presents to-night. 'By!

DORIS. Oh sister, everybody is talking about Christmas presents and a Christmas tree. I do want one so badly. Can't we have one at all this year?

BETTY. I do not see how we can, dear. I want one, too, but there isn't enough money. Next year, papa says, we shall have a big celebration, but it did take so much to move us all from England. We must wait.

DORIS. I wonder whether there are American fairies as well as English ones. I have always wished I could see a fairy.

BETTY. So have I. I used to look for them.

DORIS. Oh, let's look for one now!

BETTY. It doesn't seem the right time of the year, somehow.

DORIS. Let's look, anyway.

They look. FAIRIES dodge about tree.

BETTY. I thought I saw something white on the other side of this tree.

DORIS. Oh, it's the fairies!

FAIRIES skip out and make deep curtsies.

DORIS. How lovely!

NOREEN. It is a long time since we have heard a child say she believed in us. It makes us very happy.

COREEN. You see, we wanted some mortal child to help us out.

DORIS. I thought fairies could do anything.

BETTY. We'd love to help you, though.

ZIP. You see, we have our hearts set on having a Christmas party and there is no one to tell us how to go about it.

IRENE. Could you do that?

DORIS. Yes, indeed. We always used to have lovely parties at Christmas time.

BETTY. Next year we'll have another.

COREEN. If you help us with our party, you can come to it right now.

DORIS. Right now?

NOREEN. Yes.

ZIP. What is the sense in waiting? What shall we do first?

BETTY. Why—why—how quick you are! The first thing is to get a little tree.

ZIP. A tree? Will this do? [*Pointing to a shrub.*]

DORIS. Oh no! That is too bare. A Christmas tree must have needles on it.

IRENE. Here is a good one. I heard a boy say so.

BETTY. It ought to have a star, a golden or silver star, at the very top.

COREEN. That is easy. We will call the Star Child.

*FAIRIES sing to the tune of SANTA LUCIA.**

*Page 149, New Common-School Song Book.

FAIRIES [*sing*].

Far from the azure sky,
 Star Child, oh hear us.
 Come from thy home on high,
 Bring thy star with thee.
 Lend it to us, we pray,
 On this glad Christmas Day.
 Canst thou not hear us
 Calling, yes calling?

STAR CHILD *replies by singing first four lines of song off stage, appearing on the fifth line.*

STAR CHILD [*sings*].

Far from my home on high
 I hear you calling,
 And I am hastening nigh,
 Evening is falling.

Softly I come to you,
 Bringing my star, I come;
 Gladly I'll aid you,
 Gladly I'll come.

STAR CHILD *fastens star to tip of tree.*

DORIS. How beautiful!

NOREEN. What else does our tree need, O earth children?

BETTY. We had cranberries strung on strings one year.
 They looked bright and cheerful.

IRENE. It would be wrong to use them if many are used
 at Christmas time by Santa. He does have such a hard
 time collecting all the things he has to use.

COREEN. What could we use that would do just as well?

ZIP. Oh, I know! Berries! We can use the pretty red
 berries that grow in the wood, the wild rose haws, the
 partridge berry and the black alder. They are very

pretty and bright. I will call Berry. He is one of the brownies and is a cousin of mine to boot. He draws a circle on the ground, stamps three times, draws another circle and claps three times. [*Calls.*] Berry! O Berry!

BERRY. Well, here I am. What can I do for you, cousin?

ZIP [*goes up to BERRY and fingers the chains of berries about his neck*]. You see we are having a Christmas party and fixing up a Christmas tree, just like the little earth children have. Will you lend us the berries that hang about your neck?

BERRY. Gladly, if I may stay and join in the fun. Here, ladies, catch these and arrange them to suit yourselves.

He throws the chains of berries to the FAIRIES, who catch them up with exclamations of delight.

NOREEN [*with her head a bit to one side*]. It still looks a little bare. How shall we make it more lovely?

IRENE. Oh, I know. We must call in the Snowflakes.

COREEN. We do not need to call them. It has been getting ready to snow all day.

IRENE. Here they come now!

Enter SNOWFLAKES, two from each side. The first and third as they speak throw artificial snow over the tree. The second wreathes it with tinsel and the fourth hangs decorations representing icicles on the tree.

FIRST SNOWFLAKE [*sings or recites*].

We are the Christmas snowflakes,
And everywhere we go,
We pile the outdoor scenery
'Neath heaps of shining snow.

SECOND SNOWFLAKE [*sings or recites*].

Here are Christmas garlands,
So silvery and bright,
They catch the sunlight's radiance
And sparkle in its light.

THIRD SNOWFLAKE [*sings or recites*].

We heap the tall, green pine tree
 With countless stars of snow,
 And cover all the ugliness
 That's on the world below.

FOURTH SNOWFLAKE [*sings or recites*].

Sparkling icicles I bring,
 To hang in beauty rare;
 At Christmas time of all times,
 We make the earth more fair.

*The SNOWFLAKES scatter artificial snow on everyone and dance off the stage singing the SNOWFLAKE SONG to the tune of SANTA CLAUS IS COMING.**

SNOWFLAKES [*sing*].

Snowflakes swirling past,
 Falling downward, thick and fast,
 Snowflakes downward fall,
 Over the brown earth, covering all.

DORIS. Oh, I do think that this is the prettiest Christmas tree I ever saw! There is only one more thing that we need to make it perfect.

NOREEN. What is that, little earth child?

DORIS. On our tree last year there were presents.

NOREEN. We have no presents. In the long ago days when everyone believed in us, there were so many little Princes and Princesses that we gave away all our magic shoes, invisible cloaks and our necklaces and mirrors.

COREEN. We could ask Santa Claus for presents.

IRENE. Oh no, Coreen, that would never do. He has millions of little earth children to think about, without bothering with the fairy folk.

BERRY. Why don't you ask the Birthday Bundle Man?

*Page 70, New Common-School Song Book.

NOREEN. It is the very thing. When was your last birthday, little girl?

DORIS. Last June. I was six.

COREEN. Mercy, that is too far away! He'd never come for that. When was yours?

BETTY. December twenty-sixth.

IRENE. That would do beautifully. Take my wand, Betty, close your eyes tight, and say—Oh, wait a moment! How old are you, anyway?

BETTY. Nine.

IRENE. Well, close your eyes and touch your forehead nine times with the star at the end of my wand. Then say:

Birthday Man, I hope you're near,
We all want you to come here.

After that turn around three times and make a wish.

BETTY [*does as she is told*].

Birthday Man, I hope you're near,
We all want you to come here.

[*She turns about three times.*]

Please bring presents to all the fairy folk here.

BIRTHDAY BUNDLE MAN [*enters briskly*]. Well, here I am, and glad enough to be called. Christmas is my dull season, for people are so busy sending Christmas presents that birthdays are sadly neglected. I am usually bored to tears. It was nice of you to make a wish for the fairies, my dear, and I will be most happy to grant it. Here, you may make your own selection. [*He hands BETTY a list.*]

BETTY. Let me see. A new crown. None of you need crowns, and a spider web handkerchief isn't big enough for a Christmas present. Besides, I don't like spiders. Here are some moonbeam spangles. Any fairy could use them. Tie them on the tree for Coreen, Doris.

COREEN [*curtsies*]. Thank you, dear child, and you, too, Birthday Bundle Man.

BIRTHDAY BUNDLE MAN. Don't mention it.

BETTY. Here is a wishing nut for Zip. That will do for him, and this string of South Sea berries will be just the thing for his cousin. They came from the royal garden of fairies and have magic power, Uncle told us.

Both BROWNIES double up in making very deep bows, as DORIS ties their presents on the tree.

BETTY. Here is a new star to tip a wand with. I see that your star is broken a bit, Noreen, so it will be just right for you.

NOREEN. Oh, I am so grateful! You can't imagine how shabby I felt with that broken star, and really, stars are so expensive that I could not afford to get another. Thank you, thank you, thank you!

BETTY. And here is a new book, just published, telling fairies how to make children believe in them and love them, and also how to arrange any kind of a party at any time of year, from New Year's Day to Christmas. It is just what Irene needs and wants.

IRENE. What a lovely present! Now we can have a Christmas party every day in the year, if we want it. I am so happy that I feel just like dancing and singing. Let's sing one song and then we must skip away, for it is getting late.

All join in singing a Christmas carol.

—Rebecca Rice

THE LIGHT IN THE WINDOW

CHARACTERS

BERYL.....*a poor orphan child about 12 years old*
DAVID....*BERYL's brother, 13 years old, who sells brooms*
FRANCESCA..*the little 6-year-old sister, pet of the other two*
CARA.....*a rich child lost in the forest*
CARL*CARA's brother*

THE MOTHER *of CARA and CARL*

TIME: *Christmas Eve.*

PLACE: *The cottage home of the three little orphans.*

FRANCESCA *opens the door, hastily closes it and runs up to her sister.*

FRANCESCA. My, but it is cold outside! David will be nearly frozen. It is snowing, too.

BERYL. Pull back the curtain, little one, so the light will shine out a long way. David loves to see it shining when he comes up the long hill. One night last winter when it was terribly cold, he said that it was the thing that gave him strength to get here.

FRANCESCA. I hope he has sold every one of the brooms and has his pockets full of pennies. Don't you, sister?

BERYL. It is Christmas time now and nobody is thinking about brooms, Francesca. They are thinking about glass balls, wreaths, tinsel and Santa Claus. They all are thinking about their own beautiful Christmas.

FRANCESCA. What is Christmas, sister?

BERYL. Before daddy and mother died, it was the happiest day in all the year. It meant presents on the Christmas tree and jolly old Santa Claus. And before Christmas was lovely, too. The day before, we went out into the

woods and filled our arms with lovely green things to decorate the house. Then, Christmas Eve we would sit by the fire and mother would tell the lovely Christmas story. Oh, we were so very happy! [*Cries.*]

FRANCESCA. Don't cry, sister.

BERYL. You don't know, dearie, you are too little. Oh, I wish we could give you a real Christmas!

FRANCESCA. Last Christmas was nice. We could hear the pretty bells ringing and you told about the little baby who was born in a manger. You sang the song about the bells, too. Sing it now, sister.

BERYL *sings* CHRISTMAS BELLS.* *Some one is heard outside.* FRANCESCA *runs to the window.*

FRANCESCA. Oh, Beryl! David is coming. Is everything ready?

BERYL. Put the chair close to the fire. He will be numb with cold. I will set the table. [*Puts bread and milk on the table.*]

Enter DAVID, sits down and buries his face in his hands.

DAVID. It's no use. Only one broom did I sell to-day, although I tried my hardest. A boy bought it. I think because he was sorry for me. Everywhere I went I saw the pretty lights, the holly and displays of Christmas presents, everything for everyone but us. I can't even go to the city tomorrow, for the stores will be closed and it is a holiday.

BERYL. Do not feel bad about it, David. We have enough bread and milk to last over and see, Granny Duballe sent in this lovely, spicy ginger cake!

FRANCESCA. Just smell, David! I can hardly wait till to-morrow. We are going to save it till then. Doesn't it make you happy just to smell such a cake?

*Page 69, New Common-School Song Book.

BERYL *goes to the window and draws the curtain.*

FRANCESCA. Don't, sister, please don't. The light looks so pretty shining on the snow and it may make some one happy. Granny Duballe said it was so cheery and homey that it made her old heart warm.

DAVID [*goes to window*]. Yes, leave it open. You do not know what the light in the window means to me when I am out at night. It is a welcome and a guide home.

BERYL [*leaves curtain*]. It does look bright and cheery. Francesca and I always keep the fire blazing brightly when it is time for you to come home, David. But it is nearly Francesca's bedtime and we have not eaten. Come, draw up your chairs.

Children draw up chairs and bow their heads.

FRANCESCA. I do get tired of just bread and milk. Oh, I know what we can do. Let's make believe it is a feast. A night-before-Christmas feast!

DAVID. Good enough. I will be Master of Ceremonies. My dear, may I serve you to turkey?

BERYL. Just a little, please, off the breast. I do like white meat.

FRANCESCA. Save the wishbone for me.

DAVID. I speak for the drumstick. Here, Beryl, is a whole heap of mashed potato, with turkey gravy and some vegetables.

FRANCESCA. O David, isn't it fun? Now I want my dessert.

DAVID. Here you are! Three kinds of pie, mince, cranberry and squash, plum pudding, nuts, raisins and oranges.

BERYL. I never tasted a more delicious turkey wing, but I must save room for my pudding and candy.

FRANCESCA. Candy? What kind of candy is it, Beryl?

BERYL. You tell her, David. You have seen more kinds of it than I ever have.

DAVID. Why, peppermint canes, of course, and twisted ribbon candy, pink, yellow and striped. Chocolate, too. Think, Francesca, of a chocolate Santa Claus as big as this! [*Measures with hands.*]

FRANCESCA. I wouldn't like to eat Santa Claus.

DAVID. Well, it might be a chocolate chimney, or a stocking, or a mouse. I saw some of the cutest chocolate mice to-day. They had pink eyes and looked so real that I almost expected them to squeak.

FRANCESCA. I think I'd like the chimney and the stocking, but it would be perfectly dreadful to eat a mouse.

BERYL. It is bedtime now, Francesca. Come here and let me unbutton the two hardest buttons.

FRANCESCA [*drawing back*]. But you have not told me my Christmas story. You promised to tell it to me just the way mother used to tell it to you.

BERYL [*sits down with Bible. FRANCESCA kneels at her feet, while DAVID goes to the window*]. I will read it out of the book. I know just where to find it for the place is marked with a Christmas picture that mother had when she was a little girl. [*Reads the Christmas story from Bible.*]

FRANCESCA. Just think of that dear little baby lying on hay in a common barn! Let's sing "Christmas Morning."* [*They sing, then exeunt saying, "Good night, David."*]

DAVID. Oh, if there were only some way to earn lots of money for them! There is so much that I would like to buy. I saw such a beautiful doll that would make Francesca dance with joy. She hasn't any doll at all. And the one I saw was such a beauty! She had curly yellow hair and blue eyes. For Beryl I would get a string of

*Page 71, New Common-School Song Book.

beads, red beads that would look like Christmas holly berries. But there is no money. It gets harder and harder even to get enough to pay for the bread and milk.

Enter BERYL with a little Christmas tree on a small stand-ard and carrying things in her apron.

BERYL. Sh! She isn't asleep yet. I don't want her to hear a word. See, David, we are going to have a real Christmas tree this year.

DAVID. It's no use, Beryl. There isn't a thing to put on it.

BERYL. Oh yes, there is! I have strung some red berries from the woods. They look like beads and make a very pretty decoration.

DAVID. I wanted to get you some red beads, Beryl.

BERYL. Never mind me this year. This is all for Francesca. We want her to have a beautiful Christmas. Next year you will be earning lots more money and we shall be almost rich. Look! [*She holds up a string of popcorn.*]

DAVID. Popcorn! Where did you get it?

BERYL. I took some Christmas greens to Granny Duballe. She just loves the woods, but can't get out in winter time. Some rich people sent her a big basket full of Christmas dainties. She couldn't eat the popcorn because of her old teeth, so she gave it to me. It was all popped, so I only had to string it. Help me put it on the tree, David.

DAVID [*helping her*]. We can eat it afterward. What else have you?

BERYL. I cut some little stockings out of some scraps of paper and colored them.

DAVID. What are they good for?

BERYL. Just to decorate. Don't you think they are pretty?

DAVID. Yes. They are cheerful looking. I have a thing or two myself. [*He goes to the door and brings back a home-made doll bed.*] What do you think of this?

BERYL. It is splendid! How clever you are! Wait and I will show you what I have made. [*She goes out, returning almost immediately with a rag doll. While she is out DAVID whistles and reärranges things on the tree.*] There, [*looking at doll*] she isn't especially beautiful, but Francesca will love her.

DAVID. Fold up the shawl and put it in the bed for a mattress. There! Now put the doll in. What could be nicer?

BERYL. Sh! What is that noise?

DAVID. It sounds as if some one were crying.

BERYL. It is a bitter night. Perhaps you'd better go out and see if anyone has lost their way.

DAVID. Yes, I'll go right out. Where is my coat?

BERYL. Here it is, and here is your hat. [*Helps him put them on.*]

DAVID. Wish I had mittens. Keep the fire shining brightly, for I may need the light in the window to guide me. I'll be back presently.

BERYL [*takes mittens from pocket and hides them in tree*].

I was wondering how I could get rid of dear David for a minute. What a good boy he is and how well he takes care of us! [*Goes to window.*] How dark it is! I can see millions of white snowflakes in the light the window sheds. The trees will look so pretty to-morrow, almost as if they were big, decorated Christmas trees. [*Goes to the fire.*] I am glad I am in here where it is warm. David is taking quite a while. I wonder if some one was really crying, or whether it was the wind in the pine trees.

DAVID [*calls from outside*]. Open the door, Beryl! My arms are full. [*Enters half carrying CARA.*]

BERYL. O, poor little thing! You must be nearly frozen. Your hands are blue with cold. Come over to the stove and get warm. [*BERYL takes off coat, and CARA lays the*

big doll that she is carrying near the Christmas tree.]

Where did you come from, little girl?

CARA. Nurse told me that there were fairies in the woods, Christmas fairies who helped Santa Claus, by telling where to find the good boys and girls. I wanted to help him, too. I've hunted and hunted and I did not find a single fairy and I am so cold!

BERYL [*picks up doll*]. What a beautiful doll! It's the loveliest one I ever saw. May I hold it?

CARA. Yes indeed! I have lots more at home.

BERYL. You are lucky! I suppose you have a father and mother and everything. I have David and my little sister Francesca.

Enter FRANCESCA.

FRANCESCA [*rubbing her eyes*]. Oh, I thought that I heard Santa Claus. There were sleigh bells in the valley. O sister, suppose he really should come and we should see him! [*Sees CARA'S doll, which BERYL is holding.*] Oh, he has come already! He brought the doll! Did he bring her to *me*? O Beryl, do say it is for me! I did so want a dolly. I prayed for one. O, you dear, dear dolly! [*She runs over to BERYL'S side and kneels down, holding out her arms. BERYL tries not to cry.*]

BERYL. O Francesca, poor dear, little girl, it is not—

CARA. Sh! Yes, it is, too. I have others and you know I told you that I was looking for Santa's fairies so I could help him. Perhaps there *were* Christmas fairies that led me here. There may have been fairies of light that shone through the window and called to me as I stumbled along in the dark and cold.

FRANCESCA [*comes closer and touches CARA*]. It was the light in the window. It leads my brother home every night and now it has brought you.

DAVID. Yes, the light in the window! But see, Francesca,

as long as you are up, you may have a part of your Christmas fun. See, there are other things.

FRANCESCA. Oh, oh! I know where they came from. It was you and Beryl that made them. I love them, love them, love them. I love every one. [*She gathers up everything joyfully.*]

[*Bells jingle, a knock is heard and DAVID opens the door. CARA'S MOTHER and brother CARL enter. MOTHER throws her arms about CARA.*]

MOTHER. O my dear, my dear, how could you have frightened us so? We have been so worried. We have been hunting the forest over since we found you were missing. I have been so anxious.

CARA. I am all right, mother. I have been having such a nice time since David found me. This is David, mother. He has been so good to me. He found me when I was lost. I saw the light in the window and tried so hard to get to the house. I was cold and tired, but then David came and carried me in. And this is Beryl. She has been good to me too. And this is their little sister. They are all good. I love them.

CARL. Why bless me, mother, this is the boy who sold me that nice broom this afternoon! How odd that he should find Cara. We are no end grateful. How goes the broom trade this weather?

FRANCESCA. It does not go well at all, does it, David? It makes him want to cry sometimes. He nearly cried tonight, for there wasn't enough money to buy us a Christmas.

BERYL. Sh—sh! Francesca, you must not say such things.

MOTHER. Come, little one, tell me what you were planning to do this beautiful Christmas.

FRANCESCA. Oh, it was going to be such a happy day! Just see what David and Beryl made for me! And see

what Santa brought! I just waked up too soon, you see. And there is the music. We can hear the bells of the church ring out across the snow. You can see the spire from the window. We are going to tell stories, too, and sing the Christmas songs. It is going to be a lovely day.

MOTHER. Yes, little Francesca, where there is love in the heart, there is Christmas. Love, thoughtfulness and generosity all three combine to make real Christmas joy. But come, get your hats and coats, for I am going to take you all home with me for Christmas. I think, indeed I know, that we can find better work for David. Come, my children, it is Christmas Eve, when all the world is attune with Christmas love and joy!

CURTAIN

—*Rebecca Rice*

THE CHRISTMAS EVE PRINCE

CHARACTERS

ELIZABETH *12-year-old daughter of a poor soldier. She is dressed peasant fashion*

RALEIGH *her brother, a year older. He also is clad in poor garments*

THE KING *dressed richly, but when he makes his first appearance his fine garments are hidden under a ragged cape.*

GASPARD	} <i>three soldiers, traitors to their king</i>
CANARD	
GETTO	

THE CHRISTMAS EVE PRINCE. . . *a large doll dressed daintily*

DONALD *the faithful guard*

TIME: *Christmas Eve during the Middle Ages.*

PLACE: *The peasant cottage home of ELIZABETH and RALEIGH.*

SCENE: *The living-room of the Cottage. A fire in the fireplace may be represented by a flash light under red and orange crepe paper.*

DISCOVERED: ELIZABETH *sitting in a low rocker with her knitting.*

Enter RALEIGH with an armful of wood which he puts down by the fireplace.

ELIZABETH [*as RALEIGH puts down the wood*]. 'Tis a bitter cold night, Raleigh. Art thou sure thou hast brought in enough wood to last the night through?

RALEIGH. There is more just outside the door. Glad am I now that I was so busy with my axe during the autumn. How the wind howls through the pines! How chill it sounds! Lucky for me that no long journey taketh me from home this night. Even the task of bringing in the wood hath numbed my hands and feet.

ELIZABETH. In spite of bitter weather there will be gay doings at the palace to-night, for this is Christmas Eve. All the candles will be alight and they will shed their rays on the fine gowns of the court ladies.

RALEIGH [*suiting action to word*]. And the knights will advance and make low bows, like this.

ELIZABETH. And the ladies will sink into deep curtsies, like this. [*Curtsies.*]

BOTH. And they will dance together, like this. [*They dance.*]

ELIZABETH [*laughing and dropping back into her chair after dancing*]. What sport it must be to be a court lady! Think of the jewels, the beautiful robes and the fine parties at the castle!

RALEIGH. But think of being a knight! Of riding a prancing charger with crimson and gold trappings and bearing a shield and a sword! [*Engages in an imaginary duel.*] And then there is the glory and the honor of doing some wonderful deed for the sake of the king. Oh, that indeed would be worth the while.

ELIZABETH. Oh yes, for the king! [*Dropping her voice almost to a whisper.*] It maketh me so angry, the things that old Babette tells me. She was here this afternoon.

RALEIGH. She is from the castle and should know what is going on. What did she say? [*He drops on his knees beside his sister. They both look about the room almost fearfully.*]

ELIZABETH [*drawing closer to RALEIGH and speaking in a low tone*]. She told of the Christmas festivities at the castle in honor of Rupert of Anstrover, the king's nephew. They are more lavish than the king's own feasts.

RALEIGH. It is all wrong. There should be no merry-making when the king is in danger of losing his life in foreign lands. The war has been a long one and our army has been hard pressed. [*He paces up and down the room.*] Who is this Rupert, to be so honored? He was glib enough with excuses for not going away to war. Said he must stay to guard the baby prince. A plague take the cowardly knave and all the villains that he has brought into the castle!

ELIZABETH [*jumps up and puts her hand over her brother's mouth*]. Hush! Raleigh, for thine own sake, hush! Many had fine excuses, and thou knowest that nearly all of the most loyal went, leaving behind many malcontents to brew trouble.

RALEIGH. Thou thinkest?

ELIZABETH. Nay, I know. Old Babette goeth where she listeth and none realizes how much she really knows.

There is not much that goeth on that she could not tell thee of.

RALEIGH. They think that she is simple.

ELIZABETH [*leaning forward*]. Do you know what I think?

RALEIGH. No, tell me.

ELIZABETH. She may be a spy. Although she goes about mumbling and looking crazy enough to frighten any one who does not know her well, I have seen her eyes as keen and knowing as a bird's:

RALEIGH. What did she tell you?

ELIZABETH [*goes to window and gazes fearfully about, then comes back to her chair and leans toward RALEIGH*]. She says that they are planning a revolt to overthrow the king and put Rupert on the throne in his stead.

RALEIGH. But the baby, the little Prince Carlo! What about him?

ELIZABETH [*wiping away tears*]. Alas! That is the saddest part. They will either keep him a close prisoner or kill him outright.

RALEIGH. Something ought to be done about it. Oh, if I were only a man! The king ought to be warned and that quickly. I am only a boy, but I am my father's son. The least I can do is to warn the king. I will start this very night. Put me up a bite to eat and I will be off at once.

ELIZABETH *goes to the table and begins to cut bread.*

RALEIGH *struggles into his coat.* ELIZABETH *draws a scarf about his neck.*

ELIZABETH. Now be careful of yourself. I hate to remain here alone, but if you are going to brave the storm, I at least can brave the loneliness. [*Knock.*] Mercy, what is that!

The door is thrown violently open and a GUARD enters, bearing in his arms a baby. He looks about quickly and hastily closes the door.

GUARD. In the name of the king I enter.

ELIZABETH. In the name of the king you are welcome.
[*Makes curtsy.*]

GUARD. Draw the curtain, fair mistress, and you, lad, lock and bar the door.

RALEIGH [*doing as they are bid*]. Yes, good sir.

GUARD. Do you love your country and your king as you should, boy?

RALEIGH. As I do my own life.

GUARD. And you, fair mistress?

ELIZABETH. I also would give my life for my king.

GUARD. That is well. You may be called upon to fulfill your vows. You may have heard of the revolt at the castle?

RALEIGH. There have been rumors of rebellion.

GUARD. It is reality. I myself was detailed to kill the prince. Little did Rupert know that I am a staunch follower of the king. By strategy and a sharp bit of fighting I escaped, bearing the young prince with me. I have brought him to you.

BOTH. To us?

GUARD. Yes. You must conceal him, or better yet, pretend he is your younger brother. 'Tis lucky that Rupert's mind is too haughty and indifferent to make him acquainted with the people, so he does not know how many children there are in any of the village houses.

ELIZABETH. We could easily pretend he belonged to us, for we have the clothing and cradle of our little sister Marta, who died of the fever.

GUARD. Good! You have the cleverness to carry it through. I must go, for they will soon be after me again, and I must carry word to the king. Guard the prince as your own life. It is a lucky thing that the snow is falling thickly, for it will cover up my trail. [*He puts the baby*

into ELIZABETH'S arms.] Good even, and may Heaven protect you! [He leaves. RALEIGH gets his coat off.]

ELIZABETH. It seems like a dream to me. Oh Raleigh, isn't he a darling? See his cunning little fingers and big, pansy blue eyes! Who could hurt such a little precious?

RALEIGH. Yes, who? But we must get to work, my sister. This room must look as if the baby belonged here. I will fetch the cradle, and you must unwrap him and hide his outer clothing.

RALEIGH leaves the room. ELIZABETH takes off the cape about the baby, looks about for a place to hide it and finally puts it under the cushion of her chair and sits on it. Then she rocks and talks to the baby.

ELIZABETH. You darling, how could anyone want to hurt you? And on Christmas Eve, too. I will rock thee and sing of another Baby King.

[Sings HOLY NIGHT]

RALEIGH brings in cradle. ELIZABETH holds up a warning finger. RALEIGH tries to arrange blankets in cradle, but he is clumsy.

ELIZABETH. Here, you take His Royal Highness for a minute and let me fix that. You are making a muddle.

RALEIGH [*takes baby in his arms*]. I never dreamed that I should hold him in my arms, although I have often imagined fighting under his leadership when I am a man. How tiny he is, and yet how much he means to his country!

ELIZABETH, after fixing cradle, puts the baby into it and rocks him with her foot.

ELIZABETH. Oh, Raleigh, it is Christmas Eve! We ought

to hang up a little stocking and fill it with some of Marta's toys.

RALEIGH. Here is one. I will fasten it up with a sprig of holly.

ELIZABETH. It seems almost as if Marta herself were here.

RALEIGH. Hark thee! What is that?

ELIZABETH. It sounds like steps. O brother! I am all of a tremble.

RALEIGH [*puts one hand on her shoulder and grips her wrist in the other*]. You must control it. Be as brave as you can. If we falter we are lost indeed. Yes, they are coming this way. There are several of them.

SOLDIERS *enter*.

GASPARD. I am sure that he went this way. Ho, lad, did a knight ride by this even?

RALEIGH. I have heard no one pass.

CANARD. A man escaped from the castle bearing the young prince with him.

GASPARD. Without a doubt he is holding him for ransom.

GETTO [*winking*]. Yes, for a ransom.

GASPARD. King Ru—I mean Duke Rupert is anxious to have him returned at once.

CANARD. He fears the anger of the king when he returns, no doubt.

GETTO. Yes, the anger of the king. [*He nudges CANARD.*]

GASPARD. Perhaps we would better make search of the place. 'Twill do no harm and mayhap the traitor is hiding hereabouts.

ELIZABETH. By all means search. It would never do to have the young prince kidnaped.

RALEIGH. He would scarce bring a baby here. You see, we have one of our own. Two babies would be too easy to discover. Besides everyone about here knows that we are loyal to the great folk at the castle.

ELIZABETH [*going up to the little stocking and fondling it*].

See, it is his first Christmas. The little stocking is hung, waiting for the first visit of good St. Nicholas.

GASPARD [*striding to the cradle*]. Let us see the baby.

ELIZABETH [*also going to the cradle*]. Yes, indeed, you may. Only, prithee, do nothing to disturb him, for he hath just gone to sleep. He is so dear—and doesn't he look like Raleigh? His eyes are just the same color, the loveliest brown—when they are open.

RALEIGH. His hair is like Elizabeth's, pure gold, curling up at the ends.

GASPARD [*turning away and walking to the door*]. Yes, yes, a pretty baby no doubt, and a healthy young rascal, too. But come, we have no time to admire peasant babies, when the king's son is in danger.

CANARD. 'Tis a wild night, but duty is duty.

GETTO. Ah, yes, duty is duty. If you hear aught of the prince, send us word, that we may recover him. Rupert will reward you.

RALEIGH. Yes! yes!

ELIZABETH. Fare you well.

As soon as the SOLDIERS leave, ELIZABETH drops quivering beside the cradle. RALEIGH puts his hand on her shoulder.

RALEIGH. Elizabeth, thou art a wonder. I was badly frightened when he approached the cradle, for I feared that he suspected something.

ELIZABETH. So did I, but in a flash the idea came to call attention to the resemblance in our looks. Luck was with us.

Footsteps are heard outside and both children jump up and clutch one another.

ELIZABETH. O Raleigh, dost suppose?

RALEIGH. Hush thee! Whoever it is might take heed of what thou sayest. Go to the door when he knocks.

A knock is heard. ELIZABETH goes to the door, opens it and curtsies.

KING [*dressed as a poor wayfarer and carrying cane, pauses at the threshold*]. May I warm myself at thy fire? It is bitter cold and I am nearly spent.

ELIZABETH. Certainly, good sir. Bring up a stool, Raleigh, and place it by the fire. Art hungry, sir?

KING. A bite to eat and a sup of hot drink would not come amiss. Thou art young to have charge of a household. Where are thy father and mother?

ELIZABETH [*sadly*]. Mother is dead.

RALEIGH. Father is fighting for the king in foreign lands.

KING. For the king, you say? Then he is not an upholder of Rupert?

ELIZABETH [*shakes her head and puts finger on her lips, unseen by the KING*]. Raleigh, will you not rock the baby? I see that he is waking.

KING. Do you know aught of the trouble between the king and Rupert, boy?

RALEIGH. Very little. We are simple peasant people and have nothing to do with court affairs.

ELIZABETH [*pouring out hot drink and handing it to the KING*]. We do not hear much in winter, for the drifts are deep and the roads lonely. There are few passers-by.

KING. Then, too, you are but children and the affairs of the nation sit but lightly upon the shoulders of the young. But come, we will not vex our soul to-night. That is a fine little brother you have.

ELIZABETH. Yes, we think he is a darling. We love him dearly, Raleigh and I. I will take him now and sing to him. [*She lifts baby and hums a lullaby.*]

During the song the SOLDIERS rush in. Two of them rush

at RALEIGH and shake him. ELIZABETH shrinks back against the wall.

GASPARD. Young villain, your days are numbered. Within the hour you will be turned over to King Rupert to be punished as he considers fit.

ELIZABETH. O kind sir, have mercy!

CANARD. You too, fair mistress! The baby *does* look like Raleigh, does he? And has he hair the color of your own? Indeed, yes, and it might have fooled us, had we not made inquiries at the house of the charcoal burner near by. Death is too good for you both.

GETTO. Death! Death is too good for you. You shall be hanged with a rope about your neck.

RALEIGH. Spare Elizabeth! Wreak your vengeance upon me if you will, but do not harm a girl and a little baby.

GASPARD. Spare her! That is not likely. When King Ru—

KING [*throws back cloak, draws sword and pushes to the front*]. Let the king speak for himself! Down upon thy knees, Gaspard, Canard, Getto, for I have returned. Shame on you, traitors! Rupert is in chains. My soldiers are at hand. Donald, who brought the young prince here, is with them. Now go! Be thankful that I have spared your miserable lives. [*When the KING announces himself, the three traitors show fear and shame. ELIZABETH sinks to the floor, kneeling with the baby in her arms by the cradle. The SOLDIERS slink out and the KING helps ELIZABETH up.*] Poor little girl, you have gone through much and suffered great fear. And you, Raleigh, are the brave son of a brave father. You have done me great service this day, for if Rupert had succeeded in holding the young prince, I should have been forced to yield all. What can I do to show my gratitude?

RALEIGH. O, your majesty!

ELIZABETH. Your majesty.

KING. You shalt both come home with me. You, my boy, shall learn to be a knight. Your duty will be to guard the prince as you have done this night. And you, fair mistress, shall watch over his comfort. Come, come home with me for Christmas Day.

—*Rebecca Rice*

EVELYN'S CHRISTMAS LESSON

CHARACTERS

EVELYN.....*owner of the toys*
 ARABELLA.....*the favorite doll*
 LUCILLA.....*another doll*

CAPTAIN JIM.....	} <i>tin soldiers</i>
PRIVATE PETER.....	
PRIVATE BILLY.....	

JACK-IN-THE-BOX

THE GUARDIAN ANGEL OF THE TOYS

COSTUMES

EVELYN is in kimono and slippers.

ARABELLA and LUCILLA are in white ruffled dresses decorated with little bows of blue for one doll and pink for the other. Their hair is tied doll fashion with bows of corresponding colors.

THE SOLDIERS wear soldier hats of blue, with a cockade of orange and orange and blue military straps. They carry swords.

JACK is in a big box. He wears a cotton batting wig and his face is painted conspicuously with red.

THE GUARDIAN ANGEL is in white, with streamers of white crepe paper and tinsel.

The dolls may be made exact representations of ruffled doll's dresses. This effect may be secured by sewing rosettes and yards of ruffling or crepe paper on a plain dress.

TIME: *An evening shortly before Christmas.*

PLACE: *The nursery, which is all in confusion.*

EVELYN. I just hate to pick up. I am so sleepy, but mother says I can't go to bed until all of these stupid toys are picked up. Oh dear, just look at Arabella Caroline Rosalie, flat on her face, and the tin soldiers are everywhere. No one is where he ought to be except Jack. [*Sits down, yawns and stretches.*] I am so sleepy. [*Closes her eyes.*]

A clock strikes nine. The TOYS pick themselves up from the floor. LUCILLA begins to twist her arm and to examine it. EVELYN opens her eyes in astonishment.

ARABELLA. What is the matter, Lucilla?

LUCILLA. It's my arm. That careless child left me with my arm bent backward over my head. It's gone sound asleep. I think it is terrible the way she abuses us.

ARABELLA. So do I. Just look at the way she left me, flat on the floor and on my face too, mind you. Such an undignified position for a French doll! It is a wonder that my poor little nose is not snubbed completely off. Do look at it, my dear, and see if it is all there.

LUCILLA. It seems to be. My friend, you have much to be thankful for. What is the matter with you, tin soldier?

PRIVATE PETER. Matter enough! That child let the baby play with me and of course he put me into his mouth, and sucked most of my complexion off. One eye is completely gone and I can only see out of one half of the other.

PRIVATE BILLY. Look at what she did to me, though! Her initials! Scratched with a pin on my beautiful, blue shoulder-strap. She has no regard for uniforms or brass buttons.

JACK [*calls loudly*]. Let me out! Let me out! Let me out, I say!

LUCILLA. It is Jack. How he does hate that box! Shall we let him out?

ARABELLA. I wouldn't dare. He is so ugly and fierce that I am afraid of him. You let him out, Private Peter.

PRIVATE PETER. I'll try. [*Goes to the box and fumbles with the catch.*] I can't seem to find the catch.

PRIVATE BILLY. Here, move along and let me try. I haven't lost half of my eyesight.

JACK. Hurry up, can't you? My neck is almost broken.

CAPTAIN JIM. Just a minute, my dear fellow. Patience is a virtue, don't you know?

JACK [*crossly*]. So I have heard, but it doesn't help much with a twisted neck. [*With the last word he bounces out. The DOLLS scream and jump back.*]

JACK [*speaks first to the SOLDIERS, then turns with a bow to the DOLLS, who curtsy*]. Thanks. Do not be frightened, ladies, for you are much too pretty to hurt. You can't imagine how I hate that box. I can't see a thing when I am in it. When the cover presses down on my poor head, it nearly dislocates my neck. What is all this discussion about? Are you still complaining about that careless child? [*He points at EVELYN, who hides her face in shame.*]

LUCILLA. She left me outdoors all night in the rain. I was wet to the sawdust. It took every bit of the pretty curl out of my hair and when she tried to curl it with her mother's curlers, she burned it.

CAPTAIN JIM. The little boy next door has a new popgun and thinks the world of it. Yesterday the window was open to let in the fresh air and I was standing on the sill. That mischievous little nuisance saw me and thought it would be great fun to fire it at me. He knelt down and aimed at me like this. [*Motions. DOLLS scream.*] It hit me right here and before Jack had time to jump out of his box, out of the window I went a-flying. I landed two stories below on my head. It was fifteen minutes before those children found me. I nearly had a rush of paint to the head.

ARABELLA. When she was teaching that meddlesome puppy

to fetch and carry, she made him carry me all over the house between his horrid little teeth, sharp little teeth they were, too, mind you. They stuck right into my poor side and I bled teaspoonfuls of sawdust.

PRIVATE BILLY. How terrible!

LUCILLA. How frightened you must have been!

PRIVATE PETER. Speaking about being frightened, her mother read her a story about a brave tin soldier who went down a sewer in a paper boat.

PRIVATE BILLY. I heard that story. The tin soldier was swallowed by a horrid fish and afterward was served up at the table on a platter, wasn't he?

PRIVATE PETER. Yes, he was. She thought she would try it with me. The little boy next door made a boat out of an old newspaper and they set me sailing in the gutter. Fortunately, just as I was about to enter a horrible dark hole, the paper melted and down I went into the dark, cold water. I nearly drowned, to say nothing about breaking the end off my sword.

JACK. Well, has anything happened to you?

CAPTAIN BILLY. I should say so! Didn't that child put a great piece of soft molasses candy all over my face and up into my hair! I could not breathe for a week. It took her mother twenty minutes to get it off. I had to be boiled in hot water on the stove. Whew, but it was hot! I nearly melted, as well as the candy. What can we do?

LUCILLA. I am sure I do not know. How I wish I was back in the toy-store window! There I was respected and admired. I used to long to belong to some one who would love and pet me. It is nearly Christmas and it will be worse than ever. The house will be filled with new toys and she will have no use for the old ones. Oh, I don't know what will happen to us! It seems as if my heart would break.

CAPTAIN JIM. Do not cry, fair lady. My sword is forever at your service. [*Flourishes sword and makes low bow.*] Something must be done.

ARABELLA. I know, but in spite of everything I love her. And another thing, I know that she loves me; but I do wish that she knew how much she hurt our feelings. It is very sad to be a sawdust doll.

LUCILLA. How I loved that sweet little Phoebe Gray who was here the other day! How gently she held me! I wish that I belonged to her.

JACK. I don't believe she has a single toy at her house. She could hardly keep her eyes away from you, Lucilla.

LUCILLA. It would be fun to belong to a little girl like that. Besides being well treated and loved, think how happy it would make *her!*

CAPTAIN JIM. But this is not saying what is to be done. That is the big question. What can we do?

PRIVATE BILLY. I know! She must be court martialed until she promises to be good.

ALL *except* ARABELLA. Good! Splendid! Fine! Just the thing!

PRIVATE PETER. See, she is awake!

CAPTAIN JIM. 'Tention! Mark time, left, right, left, right! Forward march! Secure the prisoner!

At the command "'Tention'" the SOLDIERS form a line. Their action follows the command of the CAPTAIN. As they come near EVELYN, they take her by the arms. She screams.

EVELYN. Don't! Oh don't! Please!

ARABELLA runs up and pushes the TIN SOLDIERS away. As she does this, the ANGEL enters and stands looking angry and grieved. The TOYS do not see her until she speaks.

ARABELLA. You sha'n't! You must not hurt my little mistress!

ANGEL. Stop! You have broken the law of Toyland in threatening violence to your little mistress. And you, mortal child, have abused your rights until you do not deserve to own a single toy. You have both been to blame, but you shall both be forgiven and given another chance.

Clock strikes and TOYS slip back into their original places. The ANGEL goes out. EVELYN rubs her eyes and looks at the TOYS. Then she picks up the SOLDIERS and stands them in a row. She lets JACK out of the box and straightens out the DOLLS.

EVELYN. How very queer! How naughty I have been. Lucilla, Phoebe loves you and you love Phoebe. You shall go to her on Christmas Day. Tin soldiers, you shall go with Jack to the children's hospital. You were meant for boys and will be happier with them. Arabella, I love you and you love me. I shall always keep you. You are my dearest dolly. You have all taught me a big Christmas lesson.

CURTAIN

—Rebecca Rice

A PRESENT FOR JOY

CHARACTERS AND COSTUMES

GRACE.....*a rich child dressed for outdoors*

DORA.....*a poor child dressed peasant fashion*

SANTA CLAUS

MRS. SANTA CLAUS....*in white dress, decorated with tinsel,
red hood and cape*

JOY SANTA CLAUS....*small girl in white and silver tinsel*

MIRTH*....*one of Santa's fairies dressed in white, trimmed
with streamers of red and tinsel. She carries a wand
tipped with tinsel*

GOOD CHEER*.	} boy fairies who wear red, peaked caps, fancy badges, and decorated armbands, and carry small axes or knives; might have armfuls of Christmas greens
REVELRY*.....	

JACK FROST....*a rough-voiced boy in white blouse and trousers, generously trimmed with tinsel. Around his head is a band of tinsel*

FOUR SNOWFLAKES*....*little girls in white nightgowns trimmed with white crepe-paper streamers and silver tinsel. On their heads are crowns edged with tinsel*

Crepe paper has the most marvelous possibilities. The boys who play the Christmas fairy parts in the same play may be simply but effectively dressed up with fancy crepe-paper hats, arm bands, and elaborate license badges of the same material.

TIME: *Christmas Eve.*

PLACE: ACT I—*The forest.*

ACT II—*Santa's workshop. To save time in putting on this play, the tables needed in*

*All fairies must be good singers.

ACT II may be put up against the forest background to provide Santa with material for wreaths.

In this number the scene shifts from the forest to the workshop of Santa Claus. It is a simple matter to move in chairs, a table and toys. The entire background of forest in the first act may be left, except for adding some tinsel and decorations, for every one knows that Santa Claus' house is all littered up with Christmas greens and Christmas decorations.

ACT I

The Forest

GOOD CHEER [*skips in, sees tree and goes up to it*]. Here is a fine little tree. It is just what Santa is looking for. I'll take it with me. [*As he starts to chop it down, he looks up and sees GRACE.*] Mercy! A child! I must hide.

GRACE. How late it must be getting! I am freezing cold and lost. Oh dear, why didn't I stay close to big brother, instead of wandering away into the woods all by myself? Even though I *did* want to be the one to find the Christmas tree, I ought not to have lost myself. [*Sits down on a log and begins to cry.*] Oh, I want my mother!

DORA [*enters from right and timidly puts her hands on GRACE'S shoulder*]. Poor little girl, are you unhappy, too?

GRACE. I am as unhappy as I can be. I am lost.

DORA. So am I. I have been wandering about in the forest ever since noon, when old Martha drove me out of the house for breaking the blue Holland pitcher that was her mother's and spilling the milk all over the floor.

GRACE. She *drove you out*?

DORA. Yes. She said, "Go! Leave this house and never darken my doors again. I'll teach you to break the pitcher that was my mother's and to spill the supper all over the floor." I have been wandering about ever since and am chilled through and through.

GRACE [*taking DORA'S hands in hers and blowing on them*]. Your poor hands are as cold as ice and you have no coat. Why, your fingers seem frozen! And I thought that I was cold. You have no mittens. Here, take mine. I will tuck my hands into my muff.

DORA. How kind you are! They are so pretty, so bright and cosy.

GRACE. Grandmother knit them for me last Christmas. She knit this scarf, too. See, it is big enough to go around both of us. [*They spread it over their shoulders and sit down on the log.*]

DORA. It is lovely. How much warmer we are when we cuddle up close. Let's sit under this little tree and talk. Perhaps some one will come by and find us. Tell me about your Christmas. It comes tomorrow, doesn't it?

GRACE [*jumping up and facing her*]. Yes, I can hardly wait. I just love it. Don't you?

DORA. I hardly know. I love to hear the church bells ring the Christmas carols and the glad greetings, but I never had a real Christmas myself.

GRACE. Never had a Christmas! Do you mean to say that Santa Claus doesn't come to your house? Why, he comes right down our chimney and leaves us candy, oranges and presents.

DORA. I s'pose he doesn't know where I live. I—I did hang up my stocking once and in the morning there was nothing in it but a stick, a piece of coal, and a potato. [*Puts her head down on her knees and cries. GOOD CHEER shakes his head and writes in a little book. GRACE kneels down by DORA and tries to peep into her face.*]

GRACE. I have heard that he sometimes does that to naughty children. Were you naughty?

DORA. No, I had tried hard to be very good.

GRACE [*puts her arms around DORA*]. Then it wasn't Santa. I don't believe he is that kind of a man anyway. Perhaps it was that old Martha who drove you out; it must have been.

DORA. I thought that too. I never had any hard feelings toward Santa for it. [GOOD CHEER *smiles and writes in little book.*]

GRACE [*walks up and down back of DORA with perplexed face, then sits down beside her*]. I'd like to tell Santa Claus all about you. I have so many toys that I could share with you, if he hasn't any extra ones.

DORA. You are very kind to me.

GRACE [*drawing her scarf about her closely*]. That's nothing. I wish my brother would come. I'm almost frozen and as sleepy as I can be.

DORA. So am I. I can hardly keep my eyes open.

[*They sleep.*]

THE SNOWFLAKE FAIRIES *dance in to waltz time, singing*
THE SNOWFLAKE SONG. *Tune, THE DANDELION.**

FAIRIES [*sing*].

SNOWFLAKE SONG

Little snowflakes falling here,
Soft as down from pigeon's wing,
Silent, softly, down they come,
Diamonds bring, jewels fling,
Snowflakes flutter slowly down,
Over forest, field and town.

Silently they scatter down,
Form a blanket over all,

*Page 102, New Common-School Song Book.

Decorate with lavish hand,
Flinging jewels as they fall,
Whirling, twirling, swirling so,
Cover all with heaps of snow.

As they sing the last two lines the FAIRIES dance off, two to the left and two to the right. During the dance they fling handfuls of artificial snow over the sleepers.

Enter MIRTH and REVELRY. As MIRTH speaks, she drops down wearily to the ground. GOOD CHEER comes from behind the Christmas tree.

MIRTH. Ah me, I am tired. I have hardly slept a wink during the last twelve months and even now, our work is not done.

REVELRY. Alas, it is always the way. Although we helpers work with all our might every minute of the time, there are always more children than we can possibly care for. It is very discouraging to the Santa Claus family, you may be sure.

GOOD CHEER. There is one of those children in the woods this very minute. You know it is my task to listen to all that children say about Christmas and report it. I was very much interested.

MIRTH. Tell us about it.

REVELRY. Yes, please do.

GOOD CHEER [*pointing*]. Here are two children. One has never had a present. The other has had many.

REVELRY [*pacing up and down*]. That is so often the case. I suppose the one who had much was wishing for even more?

GOOD CHEER. No, she seemed quite willing to share.

REVELRY. That was kind. We must report it.

GOOD CHEER. I have it in my little book. See, here it is, on page forty-'leven.

MIRTH [*getting up and going to the sleeping children*]. See here! It is not right for these little mortals to lie here in the cold. If they continue to do so, they may catch colds.

GOOD CHEER. We simply must do something about it. It would never do for these children to be sick upon Christmas.

REVELRY. Yes, but what can we do? You know that we must be at the North Pole in half an hour to hand in our reports.

MIRTH. I know, you are right. We can't take them to their homes, for we are behind time as it is; but we can take them with us to Santa's house. He will know just what to do with them.

GOOD CHEER. It's a good idea. We'll do it. How shall I wake up these little mortals?

JACK FROST [*skips all around children, making faces and menacing gestures*]. I'll help you. Just blow in their ears and pinch their noses and toes-es. I'll wake them up for you. [*Advances upon the children, but is driven back by REVELRY.*]

REVELRY. Indeed you sha'n't, you bad, bold fellow! Run along and paint on people's windows; but watch out, for I hear that old South Wind is lying in wait for you!

JACK. Is that so? Let him catch me first! I'll freeze his ears and nip his nose. [*Sings.*]*

THE WINDOW ARTIST

I am gay and I am saucy,
 I will nip your ears and nose.
 I will paint upon your faces
 Pink as pretty as a rose.

*Adapt to tune of The Barefoot Boy, page 166, New Common-School Song Book.

I will paint upon your window
Fern and flower, moss and tree;
For your window is my canvas.
I'm an artist, don't you see?
For your window is my canvas.
I'm an artist, don't you see?

GOOD CHEER. Ah, Jack is a sad tease, but he does not do much real harm. Come, we must waken the children.

MIRTH. Let me do it. I know such a nice way. [*She tiptoes up and gently tickles them with the tinsel at the end of her wand. They smile in their sleep, then rub their eyes.*]

DORA. Oh look! How lovely! I really believe it is a fairy. You *are* a fairy, aren't you?

MIRTH. Yes, we are the Christmas fairies.

GOOD CHEER. We are going to take you to see Santa Claus.

GRACE. Oh goody, goody! I have always wanted to see him.

REVELRY. Come, come! We must hurry.

ACT II

Santa's Workshop

DISCOVERED: SANTA *working on toys, with a big bag at his feet.* MRS. SANTA *working on doll clothes.* JOY *working on paper dolls at a small table.*

JOY. Papa!

SANTA CLAUS. Yes, my dear. What is it?

JOY. Papa, I wish you would give me a Christmas present.

SANTA CLAUS. Merciful goodness, what next? Aren't there enough Christmas presents in this house all the year around to satisfy you, little daughter?

JOY. Yes, there are presents and presents; but daddy, I want a different kind of a present.

MRS. SANTA CLAUS. What is it, my dear? Perhaps I can get it for you.

JOY. I never heard of a store that sold what I want. It's alive.

SANTA CLAUS. Won't a baby reindeer do? Blitzen has a little beauty, with white spots and the prettiest eyes I ever saw.

MRS. SANTA. You could train him to draw your little red sled.

SANTA CLAUS. Or I could get you a fuzzy little Eskimo puppy, or a fluffy little kitten with a pink or blue bow. Lots of the little earth children are asking for fluffy little kittens. [*He looks at his big book and then at his daughter over his spectacles. She goes up to him.*] Which shall it be?

JOY. Papa, it isn't a spotty reindeer, nor a fuzzy puppy, nor a fluffy kitten that I want. It's a little sister, about as big as I am.

SANTA. There now! That was just what I was afraid of. I haven't a single sister in my storehouse, nor yet in my tool-shed. They don't sell them in stores, and it is the one thing that people do not give away.

MRS. SANTA. You can't beg, borrow or steal them, either.

JOY. I mustn't fret, I suppose. That would be too much like the little earth children that papa's fairies tell about. Look, mother, I can't seem to get this doll's eyes right.

MRS. SANTA. Let me fix them. That is very nice. Are you going to put yellow or brown hair on her?

JOY. Yellow, I think. That is the color I want my little sister to have.

SANTA CLAUS [*takes out his watch*]. Goodness! The fairies

are due this minute and my bag is not fully packed yet. I must hurry!

MRS. SANTA. Well, this dress is done and Joy has just finished coloring her paper dolls. [*Rises, folds dolls' dresses and puts them in the bag. JOY goes to SANTA with the paper dolls.*]

JOY. Be careful of the bags, daddy. You must not break the dolls or muss their hair.

SANTA. Of course not. It's a matter of professional pride with me. I never muss things up.

FAIRIES *off stage sing. Tune, A SONG OF THE ROAD.**

FAIRIES [*sing*].

CHRISTMAS DREAMS

The evening shadows softly creep
When all the children are asleep,
All in their little trundle beds,
While dreams go drifting through their heads.

JOY. Hark! I hear the fairies. [*Song continues.*]

FAIRIES [*sing*].

The fairies tell old Santa how
The children mind their mothers now;
While through their heads the dreamkins go,
Of Christmas stockings in a row.

Enter the FAIRIES leading the CHILDREN.

MIRTH. Well, Mr. Santa Claus, here we are.

REVELRY. Just see what we have brought you!

SANTA CLAUS. Well, I declare, children! Isn't this a pleasant surprise? Joy was just wishing that she could have a little sister.

*Page 39, New Common-School Song Book.

[JOY goes up to DORA and examines her closely. She touches her hair, fingers her dress. DORA smiles and shows that she also is interested. GRACE runs across to SANTA and takes his hand in hers.]

GRACE. Dear Santa Claus, you don't know how glad I am to see you! You have been so good to me. I've always wanted to thank you.

JOY [*turns to DORA and puts hand on DORA'S arm*]. How glad I am to see you! I am Christmas Joy. I've always wanted a little sister with yellow hair and blue eyes just like yours, but I suppose your mother wouldn't give you away.

DORA. I have no mother nor father nor anyone.

JOY. Oh, then perhaps I can have you! Perhaps I can have you!

SANTA. Bless my whiskers! What is this all about? What is this ——? [*Pulls his whiskers as he stands in apparent amazement.*]

GRACE. Santa, can't you do anything about this? Don't you know of some family who wants a little girl? You know so many families and Dora does need a home most dreadfully.

SANTA. Bless your sweet little soul! Of course I do. Mother Santa Claus and I need another little girl and Joy will be too happy for words. We can do much more for the children if we have another set of ten fingers to help.

GRACE [*turns to MRS. SANTA*]. I am so glad! She never had a mother, you know. [*Turns to SANTA.*] But Santa, what can I do? I couldn't leave mother and father and Bob, but I'd like to help too. Mayn't I?

SANTA. Indeed you may. I need plenty of little earth children to help me fill the stockings of the poor, to cheer

the unhappy, and to bring Christmas Good Will into the hearts of all the people.

GRACE. It's a long way home, and I'd like to begin right away. How am I to get home, Santa?

SANTA. Dear child, that is a simple matter. I will take you in my sleigh and drop you down your own chimney into your own little white bed. In the morning they will tell you it was all a dream; but remember, little Grace, the promises you have made to bring Christmas Cheer to others are not dreams. That we, Mrs. Santa Claus, Joy, Dora, and I, love you and will watch over you and bring you happiness as long as you bring happiness to other people.

—*Rebecca Rice*

HILDEGARDE LILIAN

CHARACTERS

BETTINE.....	} <i>village girls eight to eleven years old</i>
CLOTILDE.....	
CLEO.....	

HILDEGARDE....*nine-year-old girl, fair-haired and dainty*

CATERINA....*eleven-year-old daughter of rich parents;
vain and disagreeable*

BEGGAR WOMAN.....*who is really a fairy*

PRINCE ROLAND.....*twelve-year-old boy*

PRINCESS NATALIE.....*eleven-year-old girl, blonde*

SCENES: ACT I—*The cottage home of Mother Maria, a
poor peasant woman, mother of CLEO.*

ACT II—*A drawing-room in the home of CATER-
INA'S parents. It is richly furnished
and decorated for a Christmas party.*

ACT I

BETTINE. Tell us your story now, dear Hildegarde. You know you promised you would the last day you were with us.

CLOTILDE [*putting her hand on HILDEGARDE'S arm*]. Please do. We all want to hear it.

HILDEGARDE. There is not much to tell. You all know that Mother Maria is not my true mother, as she is the mother of Cleo. It was a cold, stormy night about eight years ago that I was brought, a wee baby, to this cottage and left with Mother Maria. She says that I was wrapped in a rich cloak embroidered with golden lilies, but that the man who brought me took it away.

BETTINE. Did she tell you how he looked?

CLEO. No, his hat was drawn low over his eyes. She did say that she thought he had come a long way, for he seemed very tired and he was soaked to the skin.

HILDEGARDE. I was wet, too. She was afraid I might die, for the exposure made me very sick.

CLOTILDE. Was there nothing about you that could tell Mother Maria who you were?

HILDEGARDE. There was only a heavy golden chain with a curious ornament attached to it. The ornament was of gold, inlaid with tiny topazes in the design of a golden lily.

CLOTILDE [*jumping up and putting her arm about HILDEGARDE*]. Do show it to us, please.

HILDEGARDE. Alas! I cannot, for it has been lost in the forest for over a year. [*CLEO covers her face and sobs. HILDEGARDE puts her arms about her.*] Do not feel so badly, Cleo. I know that you did not mean to lose it.

BETTINE. Did you lose it, Cleo?

CLEO. Yes. I was angry with Hildegarde for some reason and I took it to tease her. [*She goes to the window and*

looks out, pointing.] We have searched the forest from here to the spring, but it is lost hopelessly, I fear.

CLOTILDE [*joining CLEO at the window*]. There is no telling whether it will ever be found, if it is lost in the enchanted wood.

BETTINE. How brave you are to stay here in the forest alone, while Mother Maria is away, taking care of poor, sick Wanda. They tell wild tales of the fairy folk that dwell beneath the gloomy shade of the wood. Tell me, Hildegarde, have you never heard strange sounds or seen odd sights?

HILDEGARDE [*dropping her stocking and gazing off dreamily*]. Ah, yes! But always beautiful sounds, like the music of fairy harps and elfin chimes.

CLOTILDE. Have you never seen anything?

HILDEGARDE. I thought I did once. One evening I walked down to the spring a little later than usual. As I passed through the forest, the sun slipped down behind the western hills. Then I heard sweet music and I thought I saw faintly, in the distance, fairylike forms.

BETTINE. But I have heard that evil spirits who do people harm make their home in the forest. Have you ever seen aught of them?

HILDEGARDE. No, never.

CLEO. I have. The time that I was so naughty and took Hildegarde's chain, I flew into a rage. Then, frightened at what I had said and done, I ran out into the wood.

BETTINE [*going up to her*]. Do tell us what you saw.

CLEO. It was twilight and I was crying so I could hardly see where I was walking, until I got nearly to the old mill. Once there, I threw myself upon the ground and cried for a long time. When I lifted my head, I was completely surrounded with horrid little imps who pointed their fingers at me and shouted.

BETTINE. How frightened you must have been! What did they say?

CLEO [*pointing her finger and making a wry face*]. They shouted, "Bad girl! Mend your ways! Mend your ways!" I was badly frightened and hid my face in fear. When I lifted my eyes they were gone; but ever after that lesson, I have tried to curb my hasty tongue and I have never gotten angry with dear Hildegarde since.

HILDEGARDE. Indeed, you never have. No real sister could be dearer to me than Cleo.

BETTINE [*looking fearfully out of the window*]. See, the sun is fast dropping behind the tree tops. We must go, ere the fairy folk get about.

CLOTILDE [*putting on cape*]. Yes, even in the winter they are sometimes seen and one can never tell whether they be friendly or not.

CATERINA [*bursts in, all out of breath*]. Oh, girls! I have the most exciting thing to tell you!

ALL. Really? What is it? Tell us!

CATERINA [*importantly*]. Well, you will open your eyes wide with surprise when I tell you. It is the most wonderful thing that you ever heard of! My father is entertaining the king and queen, Prince Roland and Princess Natalie for Christmas!

ALL. Oh!

HILDEGARDE. How perfectly wonderful!

CATERINA. Of course they would come to see my father, for isn't he the most important man within miles? And he can entertain them right royally, with rich gifts and gay festivities.

HILDEGARDE. To think of seeing the princess and really talking with her! Caterina, you are the most fortunate girl in the whole kingdom!

CATERINA. Oh, that reminds me. What do you suppose

the princess wants us to do for Christmas Eve? I could scarce believe it possible.

CLEO. Oh, do let us know!

CATERINA. My, but you are curious! But I can't blame you, for what she wants concerns you all.

BETTINE. Caterina, you are the most provoking girl!

CATERINA. Well, I will tell you. She has requested that we give a party and, instead of inviting the young nobles from Pentrand Castle and Ludlow Manor, as we had planned, to invite you common girls of the village. Even you, Hilda, unknown child of the forest, are bidden to come to the princess' Christmas party.

CLOTILDE. How splendid it will be!

HILDEGARDE. And *even I* am invited.

BETTINE. And indeed, why should you not be? There isn't a dearer, sweeter girl in the village, and some who are clothed in rich garments might take a lesson from you in humility and gentleness.

CATERINA. Speaking about dress, I am going to wear a pink silk gown with bunches of ribbon fastened to it. What are you going to wear, Hildegarde?

HILDEGARDE. Only this. 'Tis not fine, I know, but 'tis clean and neat. 'Tis hard for Mother Maria to clothe and feed two, and what she does for me is done for love alone. I'll wear my plain clothes like a queen, for they were wrought by love.

CATERINA. Well, a-day! I must hurry, for I need see to it that all my choicest things are put out of sight. The princess might catch sight of them and fancy them. Then, as her wish is law, I should be forced to give them up. I have one fine gift for her and one is enough. Good day to you all.

BETTINE. Selfish thing! I don't like her. She has no right to be so high and mighty. My mother says that

true nobility shows itself by courtesy and friendliness toward all.

CLOTILDE. By that token, 'tis Hildegarde herself who is of the nobility. But come, Bettine, our mothers will worry over our not appearing. And we must devise some gift to give to the little princess. I wonder if she will be stiff and proud like Caterina.

CLEO *goes to the door with them and waves a farewell. Then she comes and sits by the fire. HILDEGARDE comes to her.*

CLEO. Are you angry, Hildegarde?

HILDEGARDE. No, Cleo, only sad and perplexed. Together we must devise some gift to take to the princess, for 'twould never do to repay her kindness with merely empty thanks.

CLEO. I shall weave a basket from branches of the tree, and fill it with evergreens, red berries, and prince's pine. 'Tis a poor gift for a princess, though.

HILDEGARDE. 'Tis a royal gift, for 'tis given in love. I must think what shall be my gift to the princess. Hark, what was that?

CLEO. A knock at the door. Hildegarde, I am afraid of strangers when mother is away.

HILDEGARDE. I will look out. [*She peeps out of the window and whispers to CLEO.*] Oh, 'tis naught but a poor old beggar woman. I will let her in, for it is cold and she looks hungry, poor soul. [*She opens the door.*] Come in, good mother, and rest yourself by our fire and partake of our food.

CLEO *draws forth a rocking-chair.*

WOMAN. You have a kind heart, my lass, and kindness will always be rewarded. I am not an old woman, I am one of the fairy folk. Take this bauble. It was found

in the forest years ago by one of us and has been held for you until this time, when you could best use it.

HILDEGARDE. Oh, 'tis my very own, the charm that was sewed inside the hem of my gown, with the little paper on which was written my name, Hildegarde Lilian!

WOMAN. Aye, 'tis thine own. Use it well and happiness will come not only to thyself but to all thy friends. Good fortune will come not only to you, but to good Mother Maria and to Cleo, who has learned to control her hasty tongue.

CLEO. Oh, do you really know how hard I have tried, dear fairy? I did so hope that the fairy folk might somehow find out that the lesson I learned in the forest I have never forgotten.

WOMAN [*puts one arm about CLEO and the other about HILDEGARDE*]. I know, lass, and I also know that it has been an uphill struggle; and I repeat again, if Hildegarde is but wise in her use of this bauble and not only wise but kind and generous of heart, good fortune will follow. Fare thee well, my children. [*She leaves. The girls stand gazing at the door.*]

CLEO. Oh, I am so glad they know I have tried to do the right thing. But now I must start to make my basket, for if it is to be as grand a one as I hope, it will take time. What are you going to give her, Hildegarde?

HILDEGARDE. I do not know. I will have to do some thinking.

CLEO [*putting on her hood*]. I'll think, too. If you can't think of anything, and if I can't either, you can help me make my basket and we will give it together.

HILDEGARDE [*going to CLEO and putting an arm about her*]. You are as generous as can be, dear Cleo, but I must find my own gift.

CLEO. Well, I must go for my material, or it will be too late to see a thing. Good-by.

HILDEGARDE *draws her chair up to the fire and begins to examine the charm, talking to herself as she does so.*

HILDEGARDE. If she only had told me how to use it wisely, I should do as I was bidden. And the princess' gift! I have nothing fit for a princess. Must I be the only one to come with empty hands? I would like to give a most wondrous gift. I have nothing. [*She throws out her hands impulsively and the charm falls to the floor. She picks it up.*] I have this. 'Tis the only nice thing I own and I believe it belonged to my own mother. I can't give this away, even to my princess. The fairy said to use it *wisely*. I would not be wise to give it away, and yet one ought to give the nicest things to the princess. I won't be selfish, like Caterina—I will give the charm to the dear princess, who has chosen to honor us, who are poor and humble, instead of inviting rich children to her Christmas party.

ACT II

DISCOVERED: PRINCE ROLAND *and* PRINCESS NATALIE *seated side by side, with* CATERINA *standing facing them.*

PRINCESS. Tell me, Caterina, about the little girls that are coming to my Christmas party.

PRINCE. Yes, tell us, so that we may be better able to give them a good time.

CATERINA [*tossing her head*]. Oh, you needn't bother. They are all just as common as they can be. I play with them sometimes, because there is no one else to play with. Duke Harold has two sons, but they are great, horrid boys; and Lord Conrad has a daughter, but she lives too far away. Besides, I think she is a conceited minx.

PRINCESS. 'Tis our intention to give these children a royal good time. Please tell us who are coming.

CATERINA. Well, since you ask it, there will be Bettine, Clotilde, Cleo and Hildegarde.

PRINCESS. That is a pretty sounding name, Hildegarde. What is she like?

CATERINA. Some would think she was pretty. I do not. I like black hair better than yellow, not that your hair isn't pretty, princess. The girls like to hear her sing, too, although she has had no lessons, as *I* have had. *I* have taken lessons from masters.

VOICE [*calling from outside*]. Caterina!

CATERINA. Oh dear, some one is calling me. I didn't have time to tell you how funny my music teacher is, or about the miserable little hut that Hildegarde and Cleo live in. [*She runs out.*]

PRINCE. Do you really and truly like Caterina, sister?

PRINCESS. 'Twould hardly be polite to say I disliked her; I have to behave toward her all the time as a princess should; but I cannot truthfully say I love her.

PRINCE. She is too ready to talk spitefully against all her professed friends. I like her not.

PRINCESS. [*musingly.*] Hildegarde. That name seems familiar. What Hildegarde do I know, brother? [*She turns toward him, and he rises and stands facing her.*]

PRINCE. 'Tis the lost duchess. Do you remember the story of how, many years ago, the little Lady Hildegarde Lilian was abducted from the castle, and killed in the forest?

PRINCESS. Ah, yes! How very sad!

PRINCE. They suspected the duke's brother, but it could never be proven against him.

PRINCESS. Are they sure that the little duchess was really killed?

PRINCE. Yes, they found her robe in the forest, blood-stained and rent. 'Tis queer they never found the chain, though.

PRINCESS. What chain?

PRINCE. Why, the golden chain with the jeweled charm. Surely you have heard that tale.

PRINCESS. Indeed I have not. Tell me, brother.

PRINCE. Well, the story goes that the old duke married a young wife. Hildegarde was their daughter. This marriage was very much against his brother's wishes. You see, if he had not married, all the riches would have belonged some day to this brother.

PRINCESS. Yes, I can't blame him for wanting the castle. It is the grandest in all the north country. But what happened?

PRINCE. The little duchess' name was Hildegarde Lilian, so he had made for her a golden chain with a charm. On the charm was a design set with tiny topazes in the shape of a lily. That chain disappeared at the time of the little duchess' disappearance.

PRINCESS. How interesting, and how sad!

PRINCE. Yes, it is both. Here comes Caterina, with the children who are our guests.

CHILDREN *enter and bow low to the PRINCE and PRINCESS.*

CATERINA. This is Clotilde, Princess. Her father is a soldier, and she lives in the biggest house in the village. This is Bettine. Her father is a wood chopper, and she lives in the next biggest house. This is Cleo. She has no father. Her mother picks up sticks in the forest. Hildegarde lives with her. Hildegarde is only a charity child. [CATERINA *draws away her dress, and looks scornfully at HILDEGARDE, who looks timid and shy.*]

BETTINE [*goes to HILDEGARDE and puts her arms around her*]. But Hildegarde is the nicest of all of us, your Highness. You should hear her sing, and tell us stories. There isn't a sweeter or dearer girl in the whole village!

PRINCESS. We are glad that you came to our birthday party, and I hope that you all will have a good time. Perhaps Hildegarde will be willing to sing to us later.

HILDEGARDE [*dropping a low curtsy*]. Indeed I will, if it will bring happiness to your Highness, although I am not able to sing as well as I would like.

CATERINA. I can sing, too. *I can sing well. I have taken lessons from a real music master. [Sings.] Do me sol do, do ti la sol, fa mi re do. I'll sing for you, too.*

CLOTILDE. But now let us give the princess our gifts.

CATERINA [*handing a big box*]. Here is mine. See how big it is! I am sure you will like it. [*Shows rich shawl.*]

PRINCESS. I thank you, Caterina. It is very lovely.

CATERINA. I thought you would like it. Now Clotilde, show us what you have brought to the princess.

CLOTILDE. It is not much, your Highness. Just a little thing I made for you, but there is love in every stitch. [*Holds up a crocheted scarf.*]

PRINCESS. I love it, Clotilde, and it is worth much more to me just because you made it. Bettine, you have a very interesting looking bundle there.

BETTINE. It is a plant, your Highness. Some one gave me a slip of it long ago, and I have taken such care of it. I do hope you will like it. [*Offers plant.*]

PRINCESS. I do, Bettine. It is beautiful. O Cleo! What a perfectly beautiful basket! You made it yourself, I know.

CLEO. Yes, your Highness, but wait till you see Hildegard's present. She has the loveliest thing of all.

CATERINA. I don't believe it is lovelier than mine.

CLEO. Wait until you see it, Caterina. It is the one nice thing Hildegard has.

PRINCESS. And you brought it to me?

HILDEGARDE. Yes, your Highness, it was the only thing I had worthy of giving to a princess. It used to be my mother's.

PRINCESS [*opens parcel*]. Oh! 'Tis the lost duchess' chain. Look, Roland!

PRINCE [*excitedly*]. Yes, the duchess' chain. [*To HILDEGARDE.*] Where did you get it?

HILDEGARDE. I—I—It was sewed into the hem of my robe. It was left with me at the home of Mother Maria when I was a wee baby.

PRINCESS [*putting her arm about HILDEGARDE*]. Dear Hildegarde, you must be the Duchess Hildegarde Lilian who was stolen away from home when she was a little baby.

Why, Hildegarde, you must be our very own cousin!

PRINCE [*with feeling*]. You gave *yourself* to us when you gave my sister the chain.

PRINCESS. The very best Christmas present in all the world! [*Embraces HILDEGARDE.*]

CLEO. The old woman was right about the golden chain. You have brought yourself great good fortune, Hildegarde.

PRINCESS. You have brought good fortune to all of us, dear Hildegarde.

—*Rebecca Rice*

MRS. SANTA CLAUS' CHRISTMAS
RECEPTION

CHARACTERS AND COSTUMES

MRS. SANTA CLAUS. . . . *large girl wearing a white dress, red cape and hood*

BOB, eight years old.	} children
JIM, six years old.	
DOT, nine years old.	
RUTH, six years old.	
JESSIE, BETTY, MARION, JOHN. . .	

HOLLY	} fairies, wearing white dresses trimmed with sprays or flowers of the names they are known by, and carrying wands.
EVERGREEN	
MISTLETOE	
LAUREL	
POINSETTIA	

For a little girl fairy, a white dress foundation may be further embellished by tinsel, red Japanese fiber rope, and crepe paper ruffles.

TRIP	} brownies, wearing fancy caps of crepe paper in the Christmas colors with arm-bands and streamers.
SPEED	
FLEET	
FLIP	
SKIP	

GOOD WILL. . . . *a large girl wearing white dress and crown with tinsel trimming.*

ACT I. *Ordinary living room.*

ACT II. *MRS. SANTA'S workshop.*

It is a simple matter, with the moving of the furniture and the addition of a few greens and toys, to make MRS. SANTA'S Workshop out of a plain interior.

ACT I

DISCOVERED: DOT *reading*; BOB *flat on his stomach on the floor writing*; JIM and RUTH *bouncing a ball, a kitten in DOT's lap*.

DOT [*looking up*]. What are you doing, Bob?

BOB. Oh, I'm writing a letter to Santa Claus. Don't bother me.

RUTH. Santa's coming!

JIM. Don't you s'pose I know it? I want a ball, a Teddy and a candy cane so long. [*Measures with hands.*]

RUTH. I want a live doll, a hair ribbon, and a new little kitten with blue eyes. I want some clothes to dress her up in, too.

DOT. What do you want of a new kitten when we have Dolly? She does need some new clothes, though.

RUTH. I want a kitten as big as that. [*Shows size.*] I'd like a pink dress and a new apron, too.

BOB. I am asking for a sweater, skates, and a toboggan. How do you spell toboggan, Dot?

DOT. T-a-b-a-g-u-n. That's the way *I* spell it. I want a sewing-basket, a school-bag and a new coat with a squirrel collar.

BOB. What I can't understand is, how a man can make doll clothes, sweaters and such stuff. I can't believe that he does it!

DOT. Yes, you can understand how he makes doll houses, sleds and things that are put together with glue and nails, but sewing! Imagine papa sewing!

RUTH. Papa can't even thread a needle, 'cause I asked him once and he said, "Go ask mother."

BETTY [*running in, followed by JESSIE and MARION*]. O Jessie, Marion and I have found out the most exciting thing! Santa Claus is married!

DOT [*springing up, dropping book and kitten*]. Married! Santa married!

JESSIE. Yes, and it is Mrs. Santa Claus who makes all the presents for the boys and girls that take needle and thread. She makes sweaters and mittens, too.

BOB. I never heard of her before.

RUTH. Neither did I.

JIM. Nor I.

MARION. And Santa gets all the thanks, for nobody knows about Mrs. Santa.

DOT. I don't think that is fair.

JESSIE. Oh, let's do something for *Mrs.* Santa Claus this year!

ALL. Great! Yes! Lets!

BETTY. But what shall we do?

DOT. Oh, I know. Let's have a party for her and speak pieces.

BOB. Let each one of us do something for her.

JOHN [*entering with small Christmas tree*]. Here is a little Christmas tree. I brought it for us to decorate for Santa Claus.

JESSIE. Oh, let's have *it* for Mrs. Santa Claus this year.

ALL. Yes! Good! Let's tell mother! [*Exeunt ALL.*]

*Enter four FAIRIES, two from each side. They run up and curtsy to their partners, adapting to the tune of COME BACK, SWEET MAY.**

FAIRIES [*sing*].

Dance up and greet your partner,
Dance up and greet your partner,
Dance up and greet your partner,
For we are fairies gay.

Clasp hands and dance together,
Clasp hands and dance together,
Clasp hands and dance together,
For we are fairies gay.

*Page 57, New Common-School Song Book.

For the second verse they cross hands with partners, skipping in a circle. Then they join hands in a circle. POINSETTIA skips in and out the arches as the third verse is sung, reaching the middle of the circle on the last line.

Dance in and out the circle,
 Dance in and out the circle,
 Dance in and out the circle,
 For we are fairies gay.

POINSETTIA runs out; the others seat themselves on the floor.

HOLLY. Well, here we are, after a long month's absence! What have you been doing, Mistletoe?

MISTLETOE. I have been flying over north and south, finding out what the children want in their stockings. What have you done, Laurel?

LAUREL. I have been gathering supplies for the Brownies to take to our gentle mistress, Mrs. Santa Claus. They are coming soon. What have you been doing, Evergreen?

EVERGREEN. I have gone into the hearts of mortals with the Spirit of Christmas. I have put generosity into the hearts of the rich and content into the hearts of the poor. And you, dear Holly?

HOLLY. I have gone everywhere, whispering the glad Christmas story, bringing love and cheer into the homes of rich and poor. How good it is to be together once more. Soon we shall see our sweet mistress, whose bidding we carry out. How I love her!

MISTLETOE. So do I! But how sad it is that those she loves so dearly know nothing about her!

LAUREL. Yes; she won't let us tell them. Hark! Here come the brownies.

SPEED. Ho! Fairies! You here already?

HOLLY. Yes, we have beaten you.

FLEET. You would not have beaten us if we had not had to get cedar wood to make a sled for Jimmie Perkins. Where is Good Will?

GOOD WILL [*entering*]. Here I am, my children. How pleasant to be all together again!

FAIRIES *rise and sing, adapting words to the tune of HOLLAND SONG.**

FAIRIES [*sing*].

A welcome to you,
 A welcome to you,
 With gay Christmas greeting!
 We fairies are meeting—
 A greeting to you,
 We welcome you too!

HOLLY. Shall we see you at the Christmas reception to-night?

GOOD WILL. Wherever you find a Christmas gathering, Good Will will be there. I am everywhere in the hearts of the lovers of Christmas.

EVERGREEN. What a pity it is that Santa himself cannot be at the reception.

LAUREL. This is his busy night. Why, he must travel all over the world, from India to Canada and from Canada to [*names town*]. This is Mrs. Santa's party.

GOOD WILL. Hark! I hear the children coming. Let us hide, but listen to all they have to say.

DOT [*entering with BOB*]. Who is going to write this letter to Mrs. Santa Claus, you or I?

BOB. Oh, you! I can't spell well enough.

DOT. All right. What shall I say?

BOB. "Dear Mrs. Santa Claus—"

DOT. "We are going to have a party for you to-morrow

*Page 169, New Common-School Song Book.

night. We hope you will come. We didn't know that there was a Mrs. Santa before."

BOB. Aw, no, that's no good—well, just sign it, "With lots of love, The Children."

DOT. It's all right. But how shall we send it?

BOB. Mercy! How should I know? You don't suppose the mail man would take it?

DOT. No, grown folks never know about such things.

GOOD WILL [*coming out of hiding-place*]. Dear children, I will guide you to Mrs. Santa's Christmas reception this very night. She will be very glad to see you, for she loves you dearly. [*Exit, leaving the children in open-mouthed wonder.*]

BOB. Was it a fairy?

DOT. It must have been a fairy, with that lovely white dress and crown. It must have been.

BOB. She said she would show us the way to Mrs. Santa's Christmas reception. How nice that will be! We must tell the other children.

DOT. Don't you tell the grown-ups.

BOB. I should say not! They're always spoiling things.

Enter JIM.

DOT. Do you know your piece for Mrs. Santa Claus?

JIM. 'Course I do! So does Ruth. Here she comes.

RUTH. Mamma says that you must come straight to bed. She says, "Right off."

CURTAIN

ACT II

DISCOVERED: MRS. SANTA CLAUS *sewing on an apron, bites off thread, shakes apron, folds it and puts it in her bag.*

MRS. SANTA CLAUS. There! the last present is finished, and the bags are packed for Santa Claus to take to the children. How happy they will be on Christmas morning!

And how tired I am, too tired even to pick up my snippets! I will rest for a few minutes and then pick them up in time for the fairy reception. [*She leans head on hand and closes eyes.*]

Enter POINSETTIA and TRIP on tiptoe.

POINSETTIA. See, she is sleeping!

TRIP. Shall I awaken her?

POINSETTIA. No, let her sleep while she can. How late it is getting! The fairies will soon be here, and what a looking place—all snippets!

TRIP. Shall we pick them up?

POINSETTIA. Yes, let's! How tired she must be! She has worked ever since last Christmas, making dolls' clothes.

TRIP. The fairies are coming.

Enter FAIRIES, carrying garlands of evergreen.

They may sing a lullaby.

HOLLY. I think I hear the brownies coming.

EVERGREEN. So do I. We would better waken her.

POINSETTIA. Throw your evergreen garlands about her. That will waken her.

EVERGREEN *throws garlands.*

MRS. SANTA [*rubbing her eyes*]. It must be time to pick up my snippets. But where are they? Surely there were snippets and snippets of red, green and yellow, all over the floor!

FAIRIES *laugh and crowd about her.*

MRS. SANTA. Oh, I see! Which of my good little fairies or brownies has been helping me?

LAUREL. It was Poinsettia and Trip. They were here when I came.

MRS. SANTA. Thank you, my dear little friends. But what is that I hear?

POINSETTIA. It is the brownies.

Enter BROWNIES.

FLIP. Here we are, Mrs. Santa! All our work is done,
and now for a good time!

HOLLY [*recites*].

A little sprig of holly,
Symbol of good cheer,
A token of my wishes,
I bring you, lady dear.

[*Speaks.*] Dear lady, I have hunted over land and sea to find something to show my love and devotion. I am bringing you my prettiest sprig of holly, the emblem of good cheer and the Christmas Spirit. Accept it with my love.

HOLLY *hands spray of holly to* MRS. SANTA.

MRS. SANTA. Thank you, dear Holly. May your life be as bright as this holly sprig.

MISTLETOE [*recites*].

Every one loves me. How do I know?
Every one loves the mistletoe;
With countless good wishes,
And numberless kisses—
Accept them both from Mistletoe.

MISTLETOE [*hands a spray of mistletoe to* MRS. SANTA CLAUS *and kisses her*]. And I, dear lady, have brought my emblem of love, the mistletoe, beloved by youths and maidens. Accept my love token.

MRS. SANTA CLAUS. My good little fairy! And you, dear Evergreen?

EVERGREEN [*sings or recites*].

From the forest, 'neath the pine trees,
Covered by the ice and snow,
Covered by the pine tree's needles,
There the evergreen doth grow!

I have gathered heaping armfuls,
Twined them into garlands rare,
Fresh and lovely from the forest
Brought to deck our lady fair.

[*Speaks.*] I bring the symbol of everlasting joy and life. May your work become dearer and your happiness more complete, as the years slip by!

MRS. SANTA. I thank you, dear Evergreen, for your gift and for your good wishes. And you, little Laurel?

LAUREL [*sings or recites*].

Laurel from the hillside,
Green throughout the year,
Cheer all hearts in winter,
I bring you, lady dear,

Green leaves for victory
Over winter's cold;
Symbol of endurance—
Its message has been told.

[*Speaks.*] I bring a wreath of my favorite laurel, and my love, dear mistress.

POINSETTIA [*recites*].

And here is my gift, Mrs. Santa,
'Tis red as the Christmas flame,
And it holds the Christmas spirit;
Poinsettia is its name.

MRS. SANTA. My fairies are very good to me. And here is Good Will.

EVERGREEN. And the children.

Enter GOOD WILL followed by BOB and DOT.

MRS. SANTA. Welcome, Good Will! Where did you find these children, and why do you bring them to me?

BOB [*running forward and grasping MRS. SANTA'S cape*].

Oh, we've found you out, Mrs. Santa Claus, and we'll never let you get away from us again.

DOT. No, never! For we love you, Mrs. Santa! Don't we, Bob?

BOB. We do!

DOT. We have learned a Christmas poem for you, Mrs. Santa. Bob's is a long one. He doesn't like to learn poems very much, either. But he did it for you.

BOB. Go on! Neither do you, Miss Dot! But she has learned a good one for you, Mrs. Santa.

MRS. SANTA. I want to hear them both.

DOT *recites her piece.* [*It may be any verses suitable to the occasion.*]

MRS. SANTA. That is a lovely poem. And you have one, Bob?

BOB *recites piece.*

Enter JIM and RUTH, bearing a decorated Christmas tree about a foot high.

JIM and RUTH [*recite together*].

I dearly love the apple tree,
It gives us apples sweet.
And oranges and cherries
Are very nice to eat.

And plums, dates, figs and peaches
All come from lovely trees.
But the tree that blooms on Christmas
Is better far than these.

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—Rebecca Rice

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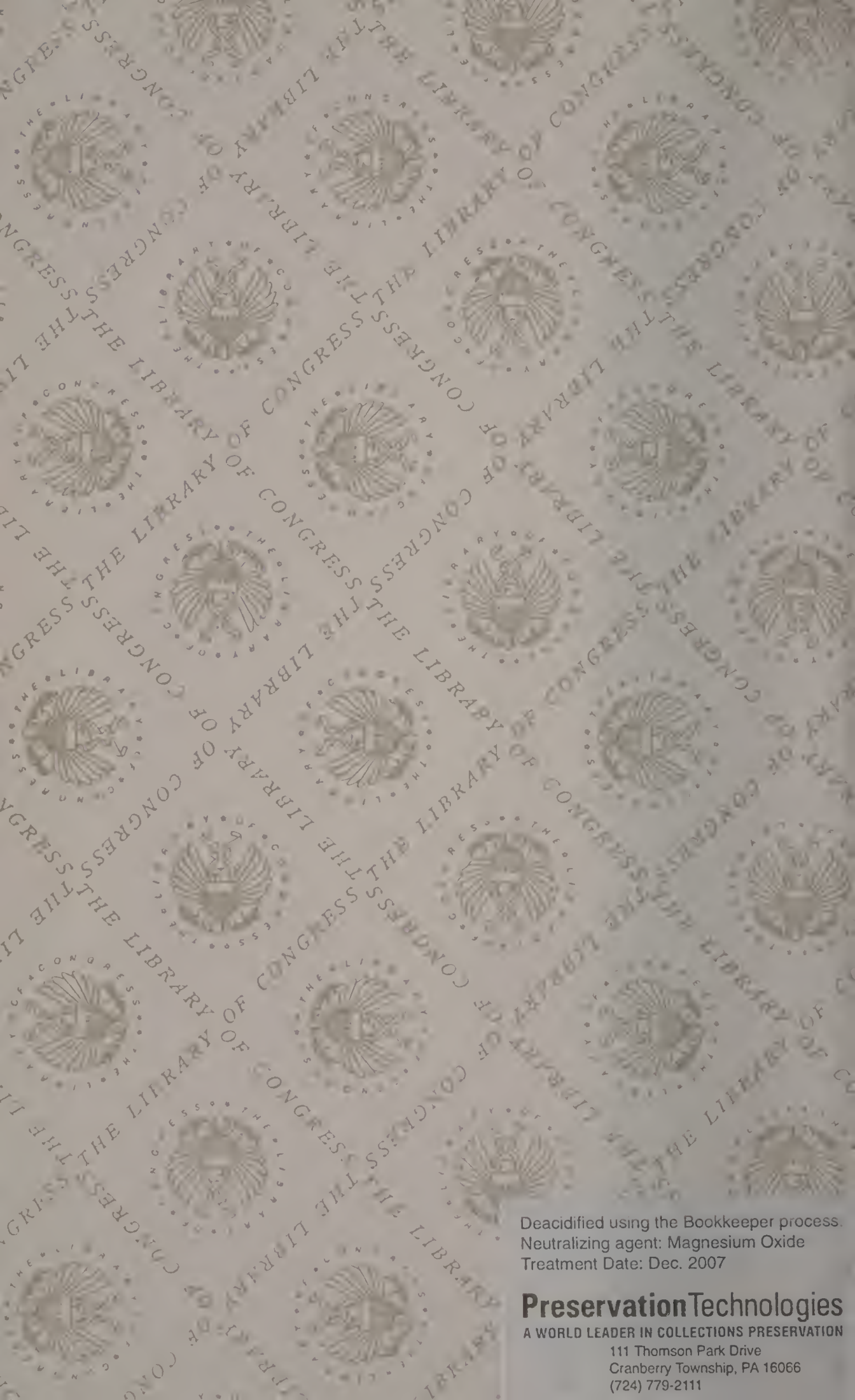
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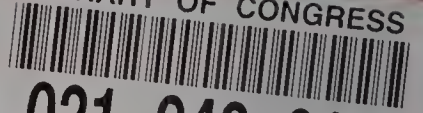


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